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EDITED BY DAVID MARCUS & TERENCE SMITH



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25

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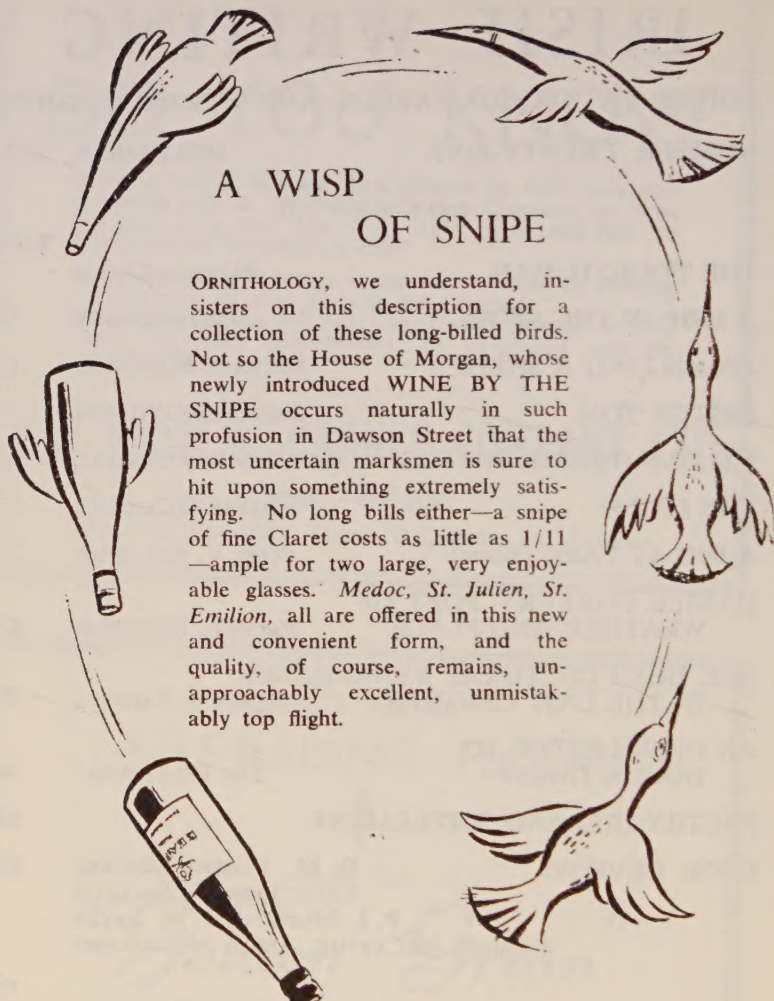
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A WISP OF SNIPE

ORNITHOLOGY, we understand, insists on this description for a collection of these long-billed birds. Not so the House of Morgan, whose newly introduced WINE BY THE SNIPE occurs naturally in such profusion in Dawson Street that the most uncertain marksmen is sure to hit upon something extremely satisfying. No long bills either—a snipe of fine Claret costs as little as 1/11—ample for two large, very enjoyable glasses. *Medoc, St. Julien, St. Emilion*, all are offered in this new and convenient form, and the quality, of course, remains, unapproachably excellent, unmistakably top flight.

Other wines by the snipe—many others—await your inspection and approval at a closer range. Now is the time to organise an expedition to Dawson Street—one half-crown will be ample in the way of equipment.

THE HOUSE OF
MORGAN

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THE FOURTH MAN

DECLAN O'ROURKE WAS MARCHING DOWN THE ROAD WHICH RUNS between Barna and Crohan. It was a long road and, even when he reached Crohan, he wouldn't be home, for the O'Rourke's lived beyond the Bridge of the Three Rivers beside the old hazel wood.

"What foolishness to live so far from everything!" he grumbled. "And then to blame me if I'm a bit late coming from the Fair!"

Declan was a big lad for his years but he was still in awe of his father who had a bad temper and a heavy fist. The farmer couldn't understand why Declan didn't leave Barna the moment he had finished his buying and selling. Mr. O'Rourke had never stayed to watch the strong man lifting a wheelbarrow with his teeth, or listen to a ballad singer and, as for looking in at the dance hall, he had never even thought of it!

The O'Rourkes' farm was a lonely place, hidden at the end of the longest and stoniest boreen in the country. Mr. O'Rourke's temper was famous, so few came visiting. Declan was a friendly lad, who loved a chat when work was finished.

There were lights at Barna and, when the dance was on, the coloured lanterns could be seen at the far side of the valley. Instead of one fiddler there might be two, not to mind a girl who played the piano and a boy with a melodeon.

That night Declan had won the prize for dancing and the prize was a ten shilling note.

No wonder he felt pleased with himself!

"If only the old fella would be proud when I do something clever!" sighed Declan. "Let's hope himself has gone to bed and doesn't hear the door creaking. I should have oiled the hinges."

Though the road was steep, he had been walking quickly. Now he paused, for he was breathless. A bitter wind swept through the gap below the White Rock and down the mountain, chilling him in spite of his thick tweed coat.

"I'll take the short cut," he decided, "or I'll not be home before cock-crow!"

He jumped over the low stone wall and followed a narrow track across the flank of the mountain. The grass, white with frost, cracked under his feet. The moonlight made his way easy and he began to whistle.

There were no other sounds. He shivered, not with cold, but with loneliness.

"The da is right! I should go straight home when I've finished at the Fair. Still it won't happen for another seven days!"

I'll work hard to make up. If only there was a bit of company going and coming!"

At the Druid Stone, standing solitary on the mountain side, the track divided. One part descended to the river, the other skirted the crumbling wall of an old churchyard. The church was in ruins and the stones were so covered with moss and long, tangled grass, they were almost invisible.

"What a desolate place! I should have kept to the road," thought Declan.

He no longer whistled and he wished his feet made less noise. Yet he wasn't really frightened.

Suddenly he stopped.

"I must be dreaming! God grant I'm in bed and will wake up at home!" he said to himself.

But he wasn't dreaming and he wasn't in bed at home. He was so close to the wall of the old graveyard he could have touched it and there, playing cards on a fallen tombstone, were three old, old men. With the cards in their hands they shifted round and looked at Declan.

Their collars were turned up, the brims of their hats pulled down but he could see their glittering eyes. They looked so ragged and forlorn sitting there, he was sorry for them.

"That's a cold resting place you've chosen!" he called. "Are you lost, or what ails you to be abroad at such an hour?"

"Here's the fourth man!" said one of them.

"You've taken your time!" grumbled another.

"Little you care if we froze, waiting here!" declared the third, the thinnest and tallest of the three, flinging down the cards and leaping to his feet.

"What do you mean?" demanded Declan, managing to keep his teeth from chattering. "I don't know you!"

"Why should you?" asked the smallest man, shuffling the cards together and rising slowly. "There's always a fourth and you've arrived. Luckily you're a fine, strong lump of a lad. Hurry now!"

"I'm on my way home!" said Declan. "And I see no need to break my journey."

"Are you a Christian man?" exclaimed the tallest. "We need your help to carry our burden down the Devil's Ladder as far as the Bridge of the Three Rivers. We're not taking you from your road and you'll be rewarded for your work."

He stepped back and lying in the grass, Declan saw a white coffin with silver handles.

"Why are you bringing it so far?" he stammered. "Isn't this the right place for it?"

"You are asked to do a kindness and you refuse!" cried the man. "Ah well, we'll manage! Bad scrán to you!"

The three men stooped to lift the coffin. They seemed so weary, their sighs sounded so pitiful, Declan forgot his fears.

"They're just three poor old fellas in a fix!" he thought. "I

must give them a hand."

"Not so fast!" he said. "I'll be the fourth man."

He put his hand on the wall to spring over it. To his dismay he could scarcely scramble across. He staggered as he stumbled towards them and would have fallen, only his pride was stronger than his dread.

"Don't be vexed now," said Declan. "But what name is on the poor creature inside?"

"Is it any concern of your?" demanded the tall man.

"None at all! None at all! I just wondered!"

"Stop wondering and get a move on!"

"Sure I will!" agreed Declan. "Only it wouldn't be natural not to wonder."

"Shut yer gob and take hold!" snapped the oldest, whose white beard reached to his knees.

They lifted the coffin together, the two short fellows at the back, Declan and the tall man in front. Declan could scarcely stand but he was ashamed to protest. He managed to shuffle as far as the wall and follow through an opening where a gate had once been. Then, as suddenly as it had come upon him, the weakness departed.

"Tis as if I'd walked on hungry grass!" muttered Declan.

The Devil's Ladder was where the path went down in wide steps like a giant's staircase. Declan had leaped and scrambled along this many a time but never had he been carrying anything heavier than his bag and himself. He strode carefully, trying to keep in step with the other three until he reached the first ledge. There he stopped.

"Jump with me!" ordered the tall man.

Declan obeyed. But it wasn't so easy for the shorter ones. They clung to the coffin, were pulled along with it and fell so heavily it was a wonder the four of them, coffin and all, didn't go rolling to the foot of the mountain.

"Let the short ones go first!" suggested Declan.

That was better though, when they came to the last step, it was so steep they had to slide the coffin the rest of the way.

At each step the coffin grew heavier and heavier. Declan's breath came in gasps; his arms ached; his legs were trembling.

"I can't go on," he said. "I must stop!"

He spoke so softly the wind blew his words away. Sighing and groaning, the three old men hitched the coffin firmly on their shoulders and began to shuffle towards the river bank.

Declan was ashamed of himself. If they could keep on, so must he.

They went slower and slower. The wind howled about them. Declan wished he had obeyed his father and kept to the road.

"Yet how could they have managed without me?" he thought.

The weight of their strange burden was making his back bend. He saw his companion was almost doubled in two. Now the four

of them were all the same height and their task should be easier but it grew harder every moment.

"It must be filled with lead!" cried Declan.

"More precious than lead," murmured the man beside him.

"More precious than lead!" echoed Declan. "More precious than lead!"

"Set it down!" ordered the tall man.

They had reached the Bridge of the Three Rivers. Thankfully Declan lowered the coffin on the ground.

"What now?" he asked.

There was no answer. He stared in amazement. The three old men had vanished. He was alone on the bridge with the white coffin.

"That's queer!" whispered Declan. "That's mighty queer! What will I do at all?"

Should he go home and bring his father? No! He'd think twas a story Declan had made up.

"I could wait till a haycart comes by, or an early milk lorry. But I'd be frozen by then!" thought the lad.

He stared thoughtfully at the coffin. The lid had shifted. From within came a gleam of gold.

"More precious than lead!" flashed through his mind.

He pushed aside the lid and gazed upon a lovely young girl dressed in yellow silk. Her golden hair framed her face. Round her neck was a twisted rope of pearls and her long white fingers glittered with jewels.

As Declan stood silent and amazed, her eyes opened and she smiled up at him.

"So you are the fourth man!" she said, sitting up in the coffin and looking happily about her at the desolate scene.

"Who are you?" asked Declan hoarsely.

"I am Siobhan, daughter of Lodan of the White Rock. It was foretold that, when I became a woman, I would fall asleep and never waken until a brave youth offered himself as the fourth man to carry my coffin from its resting place. So it happened! My father had this coffin made and, when I fell asleep, placed me in it with my dowry. Three faithful friends promised to watch beside me each night of the full moon when the wind blew through the gap below the White Rock."

"How long have they watched?" asked Declan.

"How should I know? What does it matter? You have come. I am awake and here is my dowry!"

With one spring she was beside him. Laughing at his bewilderment she showed him four bags of green leather, one in each corner of the coffin. When she opened them Declan saw they were filled with gold coins.

"I'm only a poor farmer's son!" he said humbly.

She put one of the bags into his hands. He could scarcely hold it. Small wonder the coffin was heavy.

"Now you are rich! Tell me your name!"

"Declan! Declan O'Rourke!"

She looked at him gravely.

"There was a Declan, Lord of the Hazel Wood, beyond the three rivers. I saw him once, before I fell asleep. Are you that Declan?"

The young man shook his head.

"Not at all! I'm just Declan O'Rourke!"

She laughed at him.

"I know! I know! A poor farmer's son and you're terrified of what your father will say! Have you a mother, Declan O'Rourke?"

"Indeed I have! The best and dearest in the world!"

"Declan O'Rourke! Will your mother like the looks of me?"

"How could she help it?" he asked, laughing back at her.

"Then take hold of that handle. I'll carry this end and let's be moving!"

"This is a shocking load for you to be sharing!" said Declan. "We could buy the field beyond the old hazel wood and build ourselves a stone house."

"So you will be Declan, Lord of the Hazel Wood! Hurry! Hurry! I'm longing to see it!"

"I can see me father!" groaned Declan. "And he's raging mad!"

"He won't be raging mad after I've talked to him!" declared And he wasn't!

JAMES HANLEY

A SHIP IN THE SNOW

SHE WAS TOSSED UP, BONE DRY, AND SURROUNDED BY A SEA whiter than ever she had sailed in. This was the North and she could go no farther. North is the ship's dread word; it means, "Sail through dead water all the way you go." Compass points to the South and the West and the East are frozen, there is no way out. Hug the land all the way, the oceans are closed.

To kill a ship requires only a scratch of the pen from the man in the far-off office who every year sees the sea tame at Bournemouth. Before he could scratch, others had to talk. The day would be full of weighty decisions: these would be from men who saw the sea in dreams, and sometimes a bright blue off the playboy's southern coasts. A few questions to ask, none difficult to answer.

"Has she earned enough?"

"Of course."

"And she really is worn out?"

"Naturally."

"And the men?"

"There are other ships."

"Quite so."

"Well, then, it is agreed . . ."

* * * * *

The shipping office is large, like a cathedral, almost as holy. They emerge from their conference, pass down corridors, stop a moment, admiring a painting of the *Arabelle*.

"Quite an artist that chap Turner, in his way."

"Might remove it now. Davis has a lovely etching of the new one."

"Why yes, what a good idea. You had better leave a message with Roberts."

Roberts is sentimental, is sorry at the news, hates to tear up the *Arabelle's* files, the history, right from birth, the names of her crews, all the oceans she sailed in. He reflects.

"I wonder where they are now; half of them dead, I reckon. Good ship. Pity they couldn't have let her hang on. So reliable, always came through. Oh well! Orders are orders."

Roberts, official rubber-out, used to expulsions, death sentences, begins his work. Before leaving he will leave a note for Cresswell, and before Cresswell finally goes he will leave an order for Shore Superintendent.

"At nine o'clock, round by the Bank." He will not add the

ship's name, nor will he write "Northwards." This is already known.

The final wave heaved over her bows three hundred miles beyond Fastnet. The crew were silent all the way home, but they had a certain feeling. Did the ship?

Clear her crew, discharge her cargo. Then get her into the backwaters. The men will be waiting, the strippers, the ransackers.

"Remove everything that will be useful."

* * * * *

But before they arrive many fugitive thoughts are to come. The skipper will remember a triumph of berthing at St. John's in a hard winter; and Jones, look-out, will remember a long night on the way to Rimouski, his face shaved by razor winds and somewhere around, and always around, the corpse-like smell. Ice. Quarter-master will remember the most-used signals: "Have you seen ice?" Carpenter will remember how the *Arabelle* stuck it out on a too long night, eight hundred miles West of Bishop's Rock, took the battering smiling. Evans would curse her, remembering the same night in her bowels, being hurled around, always an inch off burns and scalds.

But the thoughts will be separate and quite locked up: no man will quite know what the other thinks. Freed from her deck, clear of her gangway, they will think of another ship, another sea, another time. Let her go, ships can't last for ever.

The shore superintendent will get a slight shock, like hearing of the death of an old friend.

"Good heavens! The number of trips I made in her. Well! Well! So they've decided to let her go after all. Wasn't a bad ship really. Time flies. Now I've got to check up on bloody tossed-dry captains, lots of them around. Then there's the men. Same lot will do."

Mentally he makes quick notes, finally writes out the names of seven men, including Tunney:

"Seventy if he's a day, but all there, reliable. That's the thing. Reliability."

* * * * *

I could still see her through the window, but later I went out, got closer, where, against a white background, it looked as though a heavy black cloud had fallen to ground. There was here a silence, and so heightened that, walking, one did not even hear one's own footsteps; and it seemed also as if the sky itself, carrying the snow's reflection, had been the measurer of all that silence below. Now this was a ship quite dead, and my first impression was of a limpness in all her parts. Superstructures hung. Her funnel might never have shot steam, her sirens never blown. As for her decks, one wondered if anybody had ever walked them. Portholes are so tightly closed they will never again open. Her plates are bone-dry, as though she were suspended above this snow, dry and blistered. Running amok upon the plates are lines that look like veins. Aboard her the

silence may be cut with knives. Standing there, looking at the ship, I suddenly see the pattern of destruction.

* * * * *

Then I turned by back on her and went away. I went off to a tavern called 'The Cable.'

As I expected, they were there, seven of them. I ordered a drink, walked away with it, sat down in a shadowy corner. From this place I watched them. Seeing their faces was seeing the whole thing, beginning and end.

Seated away from the others, by instinct or by the long routine of the ship's law, there was one who could not be less than seventy, and he may have been only sixty-nine. An old and fragile man, but with lively eyes, and what a splendid look he had, proclaiming authority and accomplishment, hidden triumphs, jobs well done. He had been the first aboard. How long had she lain in dead water? A month. A long death.

In a moment this man is stood on a quay, and I am behind him. The ship is already withdrawn, folded in her own silence. The footsteps of the man move quaywards, he stares up at the *Arabelle*. I see him, tall, lean, and high-shadowed in an arc light that hangs over one closed-down hatch. He climbs her gangway, and the moment he touches deck his steps sound like thunder. He walks the length of her decks and back again, then sits down near a winch and stares shorewards. His attitude is changed, he is just waiting, there are still six to come. He knows where he will take her. Through the tunnelled water to the bony ground. There is no other place. In a far-off room the sea's agents have spoken, the word is a stone. "Northwards."

* * * * *

The man rises from the hatch, paces fore and aft awhile, and all the trust the ship had is scattered as he walks.

He moves foc'slewards, and there stands and looks around. Empty bunks, burned out bogie, one old sock on the deck, a smell of damp, rusting iron. What a terribly used deck it was. He stares down at it. How stale the air. He is quiet. His face betrays nothing, yet every second he is seeing and thinking. He can remember the nights and the heavy men sleeping, the morning pressing in and the stumbling feet moving into the new day. He turns and walks out of the foc'sle, leaving nothing there but echoes of gnarled and simple thoughts.

Her well-deck is bright red still, yet beginning to peel, rusting up, the rot setting in. Up and down the alley ways he goes, hearing the heavy sounds of his own feet, and sometimes he stops dead in his tracks as though listening to the very silence arched above him.

* * * * *

No cabin is closed. All doors are open wide, flung, left.

Let them hang. He goes from cabin to cabin, it helps to pass the time. Those other men should soon be here. He thinks of these men, a special vocation of sailor who spends his time hurrying ships to the breaker's yard. He has done his ocean sailing. Now remaining, years may be spent in backwaters, cul-de-sac, dark holes, sluggish docks, mean rivers. And how often the ship slinks out under cover of darkness. His thoughts are still tight and locked, he does not think. The companion-ladder is dirt-laden, and he climbs it.

The Commander's cabin looms up, its door is widest to this man, who pauses a moment on the brass step. He seems to be listening again, to the silence, the sounds of other footsteps that do not come. He hopes they won't be long. He is old-fashioned, yet dislikes long death-beds. As he glances into the cabin he appears to sense what is soundless in this ship. He talks, to himself, to the ship, soon due for the horizonless North. He remembers a messenger from the office, and he did not like the look of him, nor the message. He was too comfortable to move, a carpet-slipped man, flowers in his garden. He has a grudge.

"The land stinks to tossed-dry captains and they would call me out," aware of his age, his fragile bones. Then suddenly, he steps on to Commander's ground.

The warmth is gone. Has ever a man lived here? Ate and slept, checked the log, planned for shore days? The cabin seems more than empty. The bunk's stripped framework glares at him.

He sits down gingerly on the red settee. Feeling a hard lump in it, he smiles, thinking, "Lumps come into the best of them." He settles and is quiet, draws out a pipe and lights it, leans back and contentedly puffs. He is sitting where he sat, the other one. Who? He wonders. And where is he now, the one who navigated in her high days? Some questions cannot be answered.

* * * * *

The porthole, like the others is closed, sea shut out, the curtain drawn. Glancing up he thinks he sees a deck-head sweat, and remembers they sometimes do.

The others should not be long. They will come down one after the other, no man will back out at the last moment. Round-the-land pay is better than no pay. He imagines them coming down the long shed in single file, like bearers for the oceanless voyage. Still sending smoke flying he shuts his eyes. He can see the *Arabelle* more clearly in this way. Of course, he remembers her. Remembers her well.

"At one time she sailed to Galveston and Maine, Newport, the Islands, Savanella, St. Thomas. and such. Of course. And the grey days when you carried any old junk you could get. A hard ship, they used to say, wore men down. Harder owners.

if I'm not mistaken."

* * * * *

Suddenly his thoughts are frozen, for in the distance he can hear footsteps. Who next? They will come one at a time.

"Never knew sailors to arrive in a bunch yet 'cept the Navy, but they weren't sailors, really. In a bunch you know they're lit up."

The steps draw nearer, as clear as his own.

"Good. Some one has turned up," he thinks, and leaving the cabin goes to the port wing of her bridge. He leans on her rail and watches for him coming. He listens. "There he is."

The whole world's bosun is making for the *Arabelle*. He is squat and fat, with the bull shoulders and the hammer hands, the blue eyes in the leathery face. He rolls to her gangway, a lovely gait. He climbs and his steps ring out like bells. Through thick lips he hums a popular tune. He climbs the companion-ladder, slowly, casually, as though time were cut to shreds. And behind him more steps can be heard upon the stones. The others are coming now.

"Bound for a night and a day," thinks the bosun, "but it will not be long."

* * * * *

The *Arabelle's* voyage is looming up for her as black as pitch. The footsteps reach the gangway, ascend; he hears them moving for'ard. The first sailor.

The skipper and bosun talk, not shop, being too busy with reminiscences, and experiencing a pleasurable hot feeling at the back of the throat from the bosun's flask. How thoughtful of the bosun. But were they ever forgetful?

Yet they were forgetful. The footsteps they hear now are four and not two. Two men are bearing down. Those are heavier feet and they strike the iron even louder. Now, very suddenly, the bosun has heard them. He has recognised those steps, nobody could fail to, and he looks at the skipper and offers him another drink from his flask.

From the bridge the bosun can see the heads of these men. Yes, he is right, they are the men in on every killing. He could never have failed to recognise the steps, and quietly he says to the skipper, "The infallibles."

The captain jerks to stiffness, and begins to cough. How hot that whiskey is. He replies as quietly, "I have seen them."

* * * * *

They are like no other footsteps heard on shipboard. The bosun looks at them, the sure-moving men. What close-together heads. They are brothers and he knows them well. Iron men. He has seen them before. Here they come.

Their shoulders are close, one to the other, powerfully hung, and between them they carry a stubbornness and a strong blood loyalty. Now he has seen their faces. So has the skipper. He,

too, knows them. So does the line of docks, the varying ports of the world, many a shipping-office, many a hard-swearing and rescuing master. He knows them for hard, unfeeling men. He knows the ships they have boarded and worked in, and the ships they have not sailed, that would not have them and sailed without them. Ships sank under their infallible feet, yet they lived, the sea taking them, flinging them home. Their feet pound as they go.

* * * * *

In a cabin far to port the brothers wait, not caring where she goes, where they may take her, towards the tunnelled water or the Sargossa Sea, towards the stars or towards the grey, plunging western miles. The final feet are heard clattering down, hurrying, time pushing forward, the watch's hand shows a few minutes to nine.

The seven are now here and may cry, "Present."

They have left the long grey shed, the silent cranes, wide yawning steel doors. The cranes will lift nothing from these holds, nor help ship her derricks home.

"Round by the Bank," they said.

"Down to it," the captain says.

Pinning the bosun he points to the quay, "You there, get down to it," and looks at the brothers. "And you two, you know your job, I have no doubts."

He stands to watch them as they go. He watches a hawser go, the rats will climb no more. He cries, "Stand by there," as the last rope goes, as the whistle blows.

* * * * *

"That is how it was," I think as I sit at this table, in the shadowy corner, watching them, seven in all. They are not miserable in spirit, nor miserable in pocket; the job well done earns its rewards. This is how it ended and began. I stare at them all and I am not dreaming.

After a while I finished my drink and went out. I walked to where she lay and stood looking at her. She is beginning to wilt.

"Suppose," I say to myself, "suppose by some miracle this ship had escaped, had sent up her flag, given a blast on her siren and moved seawards. Suppose she had unshipped these men, all seven of them, and escaped to some as yet uncharted sea."

Today she wilts under the hammers and to-morrow they will hammer again. What was ship will be shapeless, funnel will fall, masts, plate after plate go down.

In the office they will talk about bones.

"How much do you suppose?"

"I daren't even guess."

"Thirty-five thousand."

"Wonderful."

"Isn't it?"

The black mass stares back at me, folded in two hills of snow.

MICHAEL MacGRIAN

ON KILLING A SHEEP

MY FATHER AND THE THREE MEN ON HIS FARM ALWAYS THOUGHT I was squeamish about killing things. They often joked and laughed at me and I could not explain what I felt about taking an animal's life. When I had crossed sixteen the matter came to a head. Up to that time I had got a boy's pardon and little was expected of me.

My apparent softness and reluctance to take life was clearly demonstrated on an occasion when a large pig was being killed for the domestic bacon supply.

The three men—Bill Brady, John Conlan, and Tommie Maguire—had driven the pig into the byre yard where it innocently nosed about, having had nothing but rough care and food from humans until then. Brady, a sort of untitled foreman, was armed with a seven-pound sledge-hammer and the other two had heavy sticks. Brady walked quietly up to the animal, measured it, and then swiped at its head, intending to hit it squarely between the eyes and stun it till the throat could be cut. But the pig moved its head slightly and took the blow on the ear.

It fell, struggled, then got up and staggered about in circles, now knowing enough to mistrust completely Brady and his hammer. Falling and rising and shaking its head, it squealed in terror each time any of them approached it. Brady was annoyed and the other two laughed.

He chased after it, the sledge held ready for another and more damaging blow. They all tried to drive it into a corner but by now the animal seemed to have realised that corners were fatal things and in spite of all the urgent shouts and blows, it persisted in staggering round the centre of the yard.

Brady lost his temper which never had been a long one and tried to deliver several blows as the pig dodged about. One blow hit its nose and another gashed its sound ear.

I had been watching from a window. Normally, I never interfered with the men and the fact that I was my father's son gave me no authority over them. I did not know what to do to help the wounded animal into an easier quicker death and my mind was dizzy with nausea and frightened pity. My parents were out and I had no one to call on for help. Then I remembered that my father had a small old-fashioned revolver in a cupboard in his room. I had often played with the weapon and knew how to use it, even if I had never fired a shot.

I found the gun and one bullet and ran out with it to the

yard. The maimed and bloody pig was snoring in fear and blindly seeking an impossible escape and the three men were now beside themselves with frustrated rage.

They took no notice of me at first and I had to shout and hold Brady's coat before he would listen. I was full of rage as well and it made the tears come into my eyes. The three of them desisted, a little self-consciously, their three pairs of eyes staring and bloodshot, and, like the pig, they were breathing hard through opened mouths. Brady swore thickly at the animal as if it were at fault for not going quietly to death.

I slipped the shell into the correct chamber in the gun and handed it to Brady, telling him to hold the barrel close to the pig's head. Then I went away and very soon heard the shot. From the window I saw them carrying pails of steaming water from the boiler-house and knew that the gun had done its duty.

Afterwards, the men probably felt embarrassed about the affair and to cover up they joked me more heavily as if their brutality was all manhood and my pale face and tears were weak and womanish. My father was ashamed of my apparent lack of pluck, taking it almost as a personal slight on blood and breeding as if I had stolen something or in some way had brought ill-repute to the house.

I said nothing about the pig. My father would have been angry, not in sympathy for the animal but because the man-handling might have damaged the bacon.

Bill Brady was my most articulate tormentor. He had a quick tongue and an acrid wit and some self-importance. John Conlan was his half-brother and Tommie Maguire his cousin. The three of them were very alike. They had similar thick strong bodies, heavy red necks, long noses with hairy slits for nostrils, and high narrow heads. Essentially, they were brutal. Their lives had asked them for little learning or finesse. To them, as to my father, a cow was a thing on four legs with an udder for milk between the two hind ones and worth so many pounds.

Finally, to silence and satisfy everyone I volunteered that same autumn to kill and dress a wether. The event was to take place on the first wet afternoon for we were all busy lifting potatoes during a dry spell. For a week or more the days were bright with sun and I remember looking for the sunrise each morning and wishing that the day would continue fine.

I knew the gentle beast I was to slay. I could remember it as a curly playful lamb. It was running with half-a-dozen others in a small field behind the barn. They all had the white face and high nose of the Cheviot and were pathetically harmless and inoffensive. Always they bunched together in the far corner of the field when anyone came to the gate; standing and gazing and nodding their heads, not exactly in fear, but in generic nervousness. When one moved they all moved, seeming

to abhor solitariness or isolation.

On a Thursday in the third week in October rain fell all day and at lunchtime my father said the sheep would be killed. After the meal I saw Bill Brady sloping down the fields with the dog, a sack over his shoulders to break the rain and puttees of sacking wrapped around his legs. Then I went down to the old larder with its racks of wicked hooks from ceiling to floor reminding me of tales about mediaeval torture chambers.

Conlan and Maguire were waiting for the wether to come up, smoking their strong pipes and spreading odours of wet cow-smelling clothes and tobacco. Conlan asked me how I felt, winking at his cousin. I did not answer and took up the little sticking knife and sharpened it with the steel.

Whet-whet ! Whet-whet ! the steel said to the knife's unseen edge almost like a bird call. There was a low strong table like a butcher's block, slightly cupped and black in the cracks with old blood and the larder smelled very slightly of rancid grease.

We heard the dog bark and the chopping patter of the wether's hooves. The dog rushed past the beast, turning it back and holding it for Brady to drive it into the small walled yard outside the larder door. Conlan and Maguire went out while I waited inside.

There was a slight scuffle as the sheep was caught and someone swore at the dog, telling it to go and lie down. Then the three men dragged in the victim, one at each shoulder and one at its rump, their big red hands buried in the fleece. It did not bleat and only slid along on four stiff legs. I held the knife behind my back, Abraham and thickets and ancient sacrifices running through my mind. I felt my hand tighten around the knife's haft as if the knife itself had bid me.

The sheep panted with short silent pants, the slitted nostrils moving as the gills of a fish. And its head, its lovely antique head, was wise and beautiful with a terrible wisdom aware of a long past through which its race had furnished food for knives, bellies, and altars and had heard the sonorous names of long forgotten gods chanted in cave and lavish temple.

And its eyes were there, not seeing me or knife more than another thing. But still I hid the knife for the eyes were grey with kindness, sleepy, and barred with a long jewelled stone of beauty snared in fearless opal fire.

"Up on the bloody bench with her !" Brady said.

The three men lifted it with unnecessary roughness onto the block. It lay awkwardly on its side, the four neat legs stuck out, the neck and head thrown back. It struggled a little and they held it down. It did not struggle against fear or hurt or death but because it was uncomfortable.

My hand bared the knife and I looked at it. Harlot it was to any man's hand ; a cruel strong thing not made for kindness

and healing.

"Come on, avic! Do your stuff!" Maguire urged. "What are you waiting for?"

The others laughed at him. I looked at them, balancing the little knife in my hand and I could only see three beings holding a fourth one down.

Reaching forward my left hand I grasped the beast's throat, feeling for the wind-pipe, then edging my fingers back to the ear, my right hand hardening again on the knife haft. Poising the blade just behind the jaw-root, the point resting in the wool, I pressed firmly home without resistance.

The barred eye never changed nor challenged, showing no fear nor blame. Nor did the body struggle. With rigid forearm I pressed the knife on, turning it and out-cutting invisibly.

And still the beauty of the eye remained unchanged. Slowly the breathing weakened and blood snored in the lungs, the bright breath-blood dropping slowly from the twitching nostrils while the limbs impulsively protested a very little as a worm might curl when a spade touches it.

I withdrew the knife, looking at it curiously, its senseless blade having partaken of a mystery greater than any man could bear.

"Come on—off with the skin!" Brady said, still looking slyly at the others. They had agreed between themselves not to help me but I knew exactly what to do.

Anyway, the killing was over and the beast was now no more than a stone or a lump of unshaped clay.

But my hand was still hard on the knife and sheep-smell oozed over my face as I wiped the sweat off with the back of my left hand. The knife locked my forearm rigid and I saw three similar throats, red-necked and slightly hairy with their protruding adam's apples, arrogant and ignorant. And I saw three pairs of slow guileful eyes smiling at my lividness and still the ready eager knife held my hand, still poised, still greedy, insatiable and tireless.

I turned to the sheep as it moved comfortably and sighed contentedly, the eye still barred in beauty's harmless death. Without direction I flayed the carcase and the men helped me hang it, then watched me paunch it. Gently the soft grey guts slipped out of the gaping belly slit. For their benefit I even decorated the flanks with little cuts that made a leaf pattern on the warm elastic flesh.

When I had finished they were full of praise. Suddenly I turned to them, holding the knife-blade between my right finger and thumb. Then I flung it with all my strength at the door, the point going deep into the wood and shivering. Then I walked out into the soft afternoon on which the rain had ceased to fall.

MISTER TOM

SARAH TILTED THE PAN SO THAT THE FAT DRAINED AWAY FROM THE bacon; then with a fork she transferred it, piece by piece, to the plate warming on the rack above. She put her head round the scullery door and peered over the top of her glasses at the kitchen clock. Five past six, fifteen, that's ten to, nice time for the eggs. Annie always about five to. She cracked an egg into the spluttering pan and cleaned the shell out with her forefinger. As she spotted the yolk with salt a psalm tune came to her. The Lord's my-y she-pher-erd. The old church at Dromore. White bonnet and sprigged muslin. Calm summer evenings after. In pa-a-stures green. Visit the burying ground. Aunt Rebecca, Uncle James. Flowers. Ask Annie, the night. She rather to Bangor, watch the fashions. Wa-ters by. Cousin Jack, sleeked hair, buck teeth —'Sarah's too holy to get a boy.' She flicked waves of fat over the top of the egg. 'Now the door's quite all right.' He's a quare neck on him, yon fella. 'The sanitary'll do something about it if you won't.' I gave him a right bargain' anyhow. Tired hammering the bolt-thing on. Screws rotted. Dog or anything come in, meat-safe. Rentmen's all the same, cheeky skelfs. May make a complaint when I'm down the road for the pension. She put the egg on to the plate and broke another into the pan. When the jelly had misted white she broke the yolk. Always broken for Annie. Mother used to say she lost half the good of it. Sounds like the news next door, she's late. Must remember to ask, Dromore.

She covered the eggs and bacon with a plate and went in to finish laying the table. A train thundered past the back, shaking the house. Heavy grey smoke swirled and then thinned in the yard.

The front door slammed and stout, red-faced Annie walked into the kitchen carrying her bag.

"Is that you, you're late," Sarah said accusingly.

"Ach, Sarah, wait till you see."

Her oul' sugar-voice, secret half-smile. Done something.

Annie felt down into the bag. She carefully worked her fingers under the tangle of legs until the warm softness lay full on her palm. She lifted the pup up. "There, isn't that a cute wee thing?"

The brown pup lay straddled across her hand, his tiny head with the big ears switching about as bright as a button, and his hind legs hanging stiff and wide as though they were dislocated.

'Dog, she's got a dog. I'll not have it.' Sarah felt a brief pang of despair, 'too holy.'

Quiet, going to be angry, white puckers at mouth. "Mina

Wilson brought it in to work to-day, you mind her that's married on a polisman. She says to me a good while back: 'would you like a pup, Annie?'—her man breeds them or something—so I says alright, just for a geg like, she's the sort would promise you the moon. And here, she lit in with this to-day."

"I'll not have no dog in my house, dirtying the place."

"Here girl, this isn't your house, it's as much mine as yours."

"But I'm the one who'll have to clean it when you're at work."

"I tell you, Sarah, he's as good as gold. There was never a cheep out of him all day. Mina says he's practically house-trained. You only have to put him out now and again."

"There'll be no dog in this house. You may just give it back."

"I couldn't do that, Mina would be offended."

"Well, then you may get it destroyed."

The way she says 'destroyed', satisfied. Oul' Sarah, oul' spoilsport. Annie held the dog against her cheek. The impatient move of his head against her skin sent a shiver of delight through her. "Here," she said reaching the pup out, "you hold him to you, see how nice he is."

Sarah took a step back. "I don't want it, and you leave it down and come on for your tea before it's lost." Annie isn't wise sometimes. Against her cheek. Dear knows what it's been in.

As they sat at the table the pup padded about in the kitchen.

"Pass the milk." Watching the pup too hard, waiting for him to scratch her furniture. "Sarah!"

"What's that?"

"Milk." Take her mind off him. "Yon oul' forewoman has a terrible spite on me. She checked me again about my work. Only I had the pup I'd have lifted my hand to her."

"Now you may keep your place. You got into enough trouble over that carry-on before."

"It's all right for you sitting at home, but I have to stick it all day. Did you speak to the rentman?"

"Ay."

"What did he say?"

"Says he: 'Now the door's quite all right.' 'Well,' says I, 'the sanitary'll do something about it if you won't.' I give him a right bargain."

"Words is wasted on them fellas, you might as well talk to the wall. There, would you look at that, it's blew open again."

Through the half-open door at the end of the yard they could see the cobbled entry and then the railway fence. At the bottom of the fence there were triangles of green where the posts had rotted and the grass of the embankment showed through.

"You may shove the bin against it for the while," Annie said.

"And how will I get in and out for my washing and all?"

"You can shift it. The door'll have to be kept shut for the dog."

Sarah started round. The pup was lying quietly with his back against the fender. "Do you think it's hungry?" she asked.

"I don't know. Me and Mina gave him some bread at dinner-time."

"Ach Annie, I'm sure the wee thing's starving by now. You shouldn't be cruel. I'll give it a saucer of milk."

When she got up the pup started to roam about again. She set the saucer on the floor but he didn't seem to notice it.

"Here boy," Sarah called, standing beside the saucer and pointing to it. The dog took no notice. Sarah put her foot behind him and pushed him gently towards the saucer. When the pup smelt the milk he started to lap greedily.

"There now," Sarah said with satisfaction, "it was ready for something."

The pup licked the bottom clean and then looked up.

"Ach, Sarah," Annie said laughing, "would you look at his wee white whiskers."

Sarah laughed and sat down to finish her tea. "It's not such a bad wee article, but sure there's nowhere to put it, and we could never feed it."

"Any old box with a bit of cloth in it would do," Annie said eagerly, "and Mina says it'll eat anything after a while, potatoes or scraps or anything."

The pup went under the table. In the darkness it crouched down, its tail stiff, and a pool of liquid spread over the linoleum.

"I don't know, there's that box I keep the vegetables in. What's he called, Annie?"

"One of the girls in work said he was the spit of the manager, and after that he got nothing but Mister Tom."

"Ay, that's as good as any, Mister Tom." She bent under the table. "Come out, Mister Tom," she called. Her eye caught the liquid gleam. "There you are," she said, her voice shrill, "there's your fine dog for you. I wouldn't have that about the place." Dromore, I forgot. "And another thing, if we'd a dog we could never get away for a day."

"That's a fly one, as if you'd stir a foot out of the house. Where were you thinking of going?"

"I thought you'd like a run down to Bangor at the Twelfth."

"I'm sure Mrs. Mac., next door, would look after him."

"I don't want any obligations from her, she's bad enough as it is. The pup'll have to go."

"Ach, Sarah, sure we never give him a fair trial. Mina said to put him out after a meal. I'll clean this up, and he'll not get the chance again."

"Well . . ."

"Think of the company he'll be for you during the day."

"Well, maybe we'll try it for a wee while." She held her finger up in admonition to the dog. "But do you hear, Mister Tom? You'll have to behave or out you'll go." She rose from the table. "You redd up, Annie, and I'll see if I can find a bit of sack for the box."

Black, wall's black. Lamp's out, must be after two. Waste by corporation, so late. Feet cold. Annie in middle as usual, big sod. Mustn't touch. Might awaken, angry. Wednesday, baker. A stale loaf for the dog. Growing. Wednesday. Nearly three weeks. Just slip down and see if he's all right. Lonely by himself.

Sarah eased up the clothes at her side of the bed and slid out.

"Is that you, Sarah?" Annie's voice came drowsily from the dark.

"I'm just going down to get a glass of water."

Annie listened to the stairs creaking under her. Water, my eye, I know what you're up to miss. Sneaking down to the dog. Dog, smooth hair, all perfect. Nice little struggles when in arms. Wee wet nose. Cocks ears when suck at him. Long floppy ears. Push skin over dome and he frowns, 'Mister Tom's angry, isn't he just angry?' Why can't she leave the dog alone. Frightens him. Believe she beats him in day. Cold, all dried up, no feeling. Water, Water, Beach. 'Who's for a stroll?' Dark eyes. White down on brown ears. Not just the ordinary. Where's this? Mill-isle. Bible Class picnic. Looked when bathing. Not bold, nice. Looked. Slim then. After tea, 'who's for a stroll along the beach?' Meant me. Others, no. Sarah, yes. See he wanted to give it up. Along the beach . . . beside the sea . . . sea . . . blue sea . . . See, Sarah can't keep up . . . 'Bye, Sarah, bye-bye.' Shouldn't laugh at Sarah . . . Teeth . . . lovely . . . white . . . Ears . . . lovely . . . brown . . . long . . . like . . . like . . . dog's ears . . . You . . . do . . . look . . . funny . . .

"You shouldn't feed the dog at the table, Annie. It's not good for him. I give him a good meal at dinner time."

"It'll not do him a pin of harm." She held a piece of bread above the pup. As he snapped at it she bobbed her hand up out of his reach. "There now," she said, "where's Mister Tom's manners? Where's that dog's manners?" She moved the bread up and down until the pup grew tired and ate quietly, his sharp teeth gently fumbling her fingers.

"Uncle James used to say that one good meal a day was enough for any dog. You'll soon have him as fat as yourself."

Annie cut up another slice of bread for the pup.

"Do you hear me? You'll do him harm."

"Ach, dry up. He's my dog anyhow. I can do what I like with him. Can't I, wee pet?" She reached down and rolled the pup over to tickle him.

"Well if you're not going to finish your tea, away over to the sofa and let me get cleared up. Do you want any more?"

"No." Annie screwed up her face. "Yon old fish is stale."

It'd be all right if you hadn't the dog to play with. Sarah started carrying the dishes into the scullery.

Annie swung the pup up and held him hard against her. He struggled to get free. "There now isn't he a big strong fellow? Does he want to escape from Annie? Does he? Does he?"

Sarah stopped and watched from the scullery door. Would you look at that. It isn't nice the way she holds him. She

shivered. "For dear sake, Annie, leave the dog alone and put a match to the fire."

"Ach, do it yourself."

"On you go, I've the dishes to wash."

Annie put the dog down and lit the paper and sticks in the grate. When the flames took she went out into the yard for coal.

As Sarah was folding the cloth the pup pulled at the heels of her slippers. "Ha, ha, is that you Mister? I know what you want." She could hear Annie breaking coal in the yard. She went to the dresser drawer and took out a ball of newspaper tied with string. Quivering with excitement the pup watched her. She bent down and feinted to throw the ball. He started every time. "Away now and show Annie how good you are," she whiskered, letting it go. The pup darted across the floor and chewed and shook at the paper. "Come on, fetch it, fetch it." He carried the ball for a little and then let it drop. "There's a good dog, good dog." She picked up the ball. Annie was coming into the kitchen with the coal. "Look, Annie, wait to you see this." Annie pretended not to notice and walked on. Sarah threw the ball and the pup ran under Annie's feet. There was a sharp yelp and Annie stumbled down on to one knee scattering the coal over the floor.

"There now, do you see what you've done?" Sarah's voice rose in a scream. She knelt beside the limping pup. "Has she hurted the poor dog? Poor Mister Tom."

Annie heaved herself to her feet with the empty shovel still in her hand. She was trembling with fright and anger. There was a sore tightness in her heart.

Sarah rubbed the dog's paw. "Did she tramp on poor Tom. You're getting that fat you can't see where you're going," she shot up at Annie.

Shut up, shut your ugly mouth. The tightness increased.

"That's what comes of doing things with a bad heart. I wouldn't put it past you to do it on purpose, just for spite."

Not on purpose. Not fair. My dog. My Tom. Somehow she had to break the unbearable pain. She lifted the shovel and swung it down on Sarah's head.

Slowly the warm buzzing mist drained down inside her and everything appeared very still and distant. Sarah lay twisted on her side. Her glasses had fallen off and the blue crescent under one eye showed. Annie knelt and held Sarah's head in her lap. "Sarah, Sarah," she whispered.

The pup nosed at the motionless figure, but when he got no attention he wandered off.

Sarah began to moan and twitch her hands.

The pup went through the scullery door into the yard.

"Sarah," Annie sobbed, "I didn't mean it, I didn't mean it."

The pup smelt around the gully-trap below the scullery window. He came to the open yard door and crossed the entry under Sarah's washing. He hesitated a little at the fence and then pranced through with delight into the green jungle beyond.

PAUL VINCENT CARROLL

ME DA WENT OFF THE BOTTLE

IT ALL BEGAN ON THE DAY ME DA TOOK THE PLEDGE. I WAS JUST A nipper at the time, chasing A, B and C down the Algebraic labyrinths and calculating how long it took to fill a cistern by the senseless method of leaving an in-going and an out-going tap open simultaneously.

My elder brother, Paddy, did the milking and manuring and all the slave work of the little farm, for little or no wages according to the mood of that strange man, me da. My good-looking sister, Kay, was moon-eyed about Jerry Doyle who was just back from Dublin with a veterinary degree.

Peter, me da, in his sober senses was a martinet, strict to the point of tyranny, and given to nagging and ginning if everything wasn't just plum right. But when he was reasonably lit-up with a few stiff balls of malt, he was as decent and generous a spud as you could get, and it was a delight to hear him singing "When the Moon Shines Over the Cowshed," even if he was wholly incapable of singing in tune. On such occasions, the family rejoiced and were glad.

I was always the first, little ferret that I was, to announce the glad tidings. "Me da's after comin' out of Mike Ryan's pub, and he's singin'," I would exclaim.

"He has a drop in him, praises be to God," me poor mother would say.

But as ill-luck would have it, a young pioneering priest with a pale face and the bright eyes of a zealot came to the parish. His father had been a publican, and though the profits from good porter and bad whiskey had paid for his long training in Maynooth Seminary, he had for the drink a hatred that seemed to consume his unhealthy being.

In his all-embracing campaign against it, he selected twelve elderly men to be the spearhead of his holy war on Bacchus, and believe it or not, he christened them his Twelve Apostles. They were to be a living and eloquent example to the younger men of the parish. You can well imagine our consternation when, one dreary Sunday morning, me da put on his black suit, with a Parnell tie and a half-gallon hat, and gravely announced that he was St. Peter!

From that moment on, our lives, severally and jointly, became a hell. The good old glass of malt that once submerged the prim Christian in him, and made him human and kindly, was gone forever, and on his ponderous watch chain he wore a

total abstinence medal the size of the now defunct five-shilling piece. He became the most cantankerous little spitfire that God ever put breath in, totting up poor mother's account books, grudgingly giving poor Paddy a half-crown on a Saturday night instead of the habitual ten-bob note and a bottle of Guinness, and warning Kay that if she as much as looked the same side of the road that Jerry Doyle was on, he'd hang her off one of the bacon hooks in the kitchen, as a deterrent to fleshly and un-maidenly thoughts. As for me, if he caught me knocking jam-jars off the pier of the gate with my catapult, instead of finding the cubical content of a blessed pyramid standing on its hind-end, he gave me four of the best on the bottom and promised me a double ration of the same at bedtime.

Of course we all went to me mother with our woes and worries and our comments on me da were none too flattering.

"Mother, what sort of a man is that you married at all? What on earth were you thinking of? Surely you could have cocked your hat at a more reasonable being than him!"

And she would soothe us, beg us to have patience, and say:

"Sure if your da is a savage when he's sober and an owl fool when he's drunk, it's not *my* fault."

But me da's zeal got worse instead of better as the days lengthened into weeks, and the drier his stomach got for want of a drop, the sourer he got in his tongue. But each of the Apostles watched his other colleagues with the eyes of a hawk, and me poor da daren't give in. Me mother, the cute old thing that she was, once tried tempting him by putting a bottle of Guinness near his private chair, but it didn't work. With grave ceremony, he hopped it venomously off the pier of the gate, much to me mother's chagrin, for she perforce had to go teetotal too, although she could savour a neat dram as thoroughly as any woman in Rioch. Then one awful evening he marched us all to church, mother in her faded sable bonnet, Paddy in his bowler, Kay in her little blue cape, and I in one of those infernal skull-caps that were a target for the unprintable eloquence of less respectable boyos. And there, in the presence of this ecstatic and tubercular-ridden young cleric, with me da as St. Peter, pompously erect, we raised our lighted candles and solemnly renounced the works and pomps of the fiend that inhabits every beer bottle.

The first casualty under this iron rule was poor Kay. A kiss stolen behind a cowshed door while Kay was milking. I was keeping nix for them in return for a small consideration that included a bar of chocolate, two bulls-eyes and a mug of warm milk straight from the cow's tits. But St. Peter must have been peering through a chink in the dilapidated wooden wall, for he was upon us like a lightning flash.

Kay was seventeen, but seventeen or not, in the presence of

us all, with her skirt drawn up, she got six whizzers of an ash-plant across her pink bloomers. I remember that evening creeping up to her bedroom, and how, shaking with sobs, she put her head into me for sympathy, her big luminous eyes swimming with tears and the long sheeny mane of her hair about her face. Ah, how I loathed religion and temperance that night. I swore to Kay that if she'd stop crying, I'd carry notes between her and Jerry and do it for nothing, and I'd suffer twelve of the best for her without giving her away. "And anyway," I added, "won't you and Jerry be married when the local Twelve Apostles are all in hell!"

This made Kay suddenly give way to giggles of delight and we had to bury our faces in the pillows in case me da would come inquiring as to the cause of this unseemly mirth.

But it was the quiet sombre Paddy, the inscrutable man of the fields, who rebelled. It happened one day when we were all expecting me da home from the fair, whither he had gone to sell a few fine milking cows. We were, as usual, round me mother begging her to ask him for this concession or that. Suddenly Paddy lifted the framed photograph of me da—the one he had got taken with the temperance badge swinging from his watch chain—from the mantelpiece, and in a moment of terrific venom he smashed it into smithereens on the floor and danced on it. It was a moment I have never forgotten, with poor Kay in the shakers with fear, me mother grovelling on the floor illogically trying to reassemble the broken fragments, and I hopping around like a wasp in a jam jar. To me it was the unfurling of the rebel flag. I looked up at the fine defiant face of me brother. He was Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald all rolled into one in my imagination. I wanted to be ordered to charge! to do or die for someone or something!

"Bravo, Paddy!" I burst out, and immediately stopped a corrective left swing from me mother that landed me amongst the milk crocks with about as much fight in me as a doctored tom-cat.

"I'll say I knocked it off the shelf meself by accident," said me mother.

"Lies!" yelled Paddy.

"And how else can we live but by lies when your da has the sourpuss on him for want of a drop?" cried me mother impatiently.

Then Paddy petrified us in earnest. He lifted the heavy poker purposefully and brandished it.

"There will be no lies," he ejaculated. "I smashed his damned photo, and one word out of him, and he'll get the same!"

"Take that poker and hide it," sobbed Kay.

"If you'd touch your da with that," cried me ma, "you'd wither! Even Hell itself wouldn't receive you."

In the uneasy silence that followed, Paddy deliberately went to me da's special private armchair—dare anyone but him sit in it—and drawing it roughly in front of the fire, seated himself in it, complete with poker, and began to whistle.

By this time me mother and poor Kay were holding themselves with the nerves and had both to run simultaneously to the old toilet shed. I went to Paddy, eager to get rid of this new and dreadful menace.

"Paddy," said I, "sure isn't it grand you are, and no one livin' thinks more of you than meself, but for the sake of me mother and Kay—"

It was like as if a wind had caught me up in a frolic. I landed head first in a great crock of thick cream, just ready for churning, and the next moment, I was dancing around in all directions trying to get the cream out of my eyes. By the time me mother and Kay got back, Paddy's venom had increased, and my cream-encrusted locks didn't lighten the tension. You could have cut the strain with a butter knife, and it became only too evident to all of us that serious and indeed even tragic incidents could happen.

Whatever devil got hold of Paddy he seemed determined to pile on the agony, for when Kay tenderly offered him a half-crown she had laboriously saved up to buy a blue ribbon to freshen up her washed out blouse, he sent it whizzing through the open back window. Then with a deliberate and ominous calmness, he went to the vegetable barrel, selected a large turnip and laid it before him on the top of the oven.

"What are you at, Paddy?" cried me mother who was totally mystified. "What's that?"

"That's me da's head," said Paddy emotionlessly. "Wait now till you see."

He lifted the poker and with a powerful swing cleft the turnip in halves.

"It'll be just like that, clean and complete, with just one stroke," he muttered.

I had had enough. I could feel the blood in me congealed and death-like. I ran from the house. But I was no sooner outside than I heard in the lane a step there was no mistaking. I dashed back into the house, deftly seized the poker from Paddy, and hurled it through the back window.

"Me da's comin'," I cried. "He's in the lane!"

Me mother and Kay tried desperately to heave Paddy out of the forbidden chair, but he clung to it tenaciously. Determined to be discreetly on the side of the big battalions in the imminent struggle, I seized my Algebra study book and began hysterically ejaculating about two trains, A and B, travelling at

amazing speeds between two stations, X and Y. At what exact second would they meet? And how far from station X? What the hell did it matter where they met and when! Wouldn't they be better to collide decently and have done with it, for wasn't Paddy going to kill me da anyway!

Me mother craved and Kay sobbed and entreated, but it was of no avail. Paddy was sticking to his guns, in me da's chair, and war was now inevitable.

Then as the calm of impending tragedy descended on us like a funeral shroud, we heard the step—then another and another, nearer and nearer till our very hearts stood still. The knob turned awkwardly, there was a stagger, a little snort of glee and a sudden miraculous burst of highly unmelodious song:

"When the moon shines over the cowshed,

I'll be waiting at the k-k-k-k-kitchen door . . ."

I leaped from the table and threw the algebraic book of tortures into the air.

"Me da's on the bottle!" I roared.

Me mother devoutly raised her eyes and clasped her hands.

"Praises be to the most high God!" she exclaimed.

The next moment, me da was amongst us, clapping us all on the shoulders and greeting us like loved ones back from the tomb.

"Sit down, da, you're tired," said Paddy, jumping up from the forbidden chair.

"Sit where you are, Paddy, boy," said me da. "And there's a fiver for you."

"It's too much, da, I won't take it," protested Paddy.

"It's not half enough," returned me da, planting a bottle of stout in Paddy's lap.

"The red cow with the white star went a terrific price, mother," continued me da.

"Praises to God," replied me mother who praised God for a most incongruous variety of things.

Then with a twinkle in his eye he looked at Kay who blushed crimson and didn't quite know whether she was going to be kissed or caned. But in a second he had an arm about her and the big tears were coming unbidden. He opened a parcel and handed her a smashing white summer dress with an alluring sash on it.

"Mother," said me da, "put this on Kay tomorrow because that pup, Jerry Doyle, is coming here to ask for her. You're goin' to lose your daughter."

And with that, Kay ran to me mother and buried her face in her breast.

"And pup's the word, mind you," continued me da. "The cheek of him comin' up to me at the fair with a stiff jaw on him, and askin' for her. 'You're not good enough for her.'"

says I. And if he had said he was, I'd have scattered him. But he took the wind out of me sails! 'I'm not *half* good enough for her,' says he with a grin. Now, what can you do with a pup like that?"

It was at this moment his roving eye lit on me, as I stood, robinishly, with my ear cocked for every word. Then suddenly he rapped at me:

"What are the factors of X cubed minus Y cubed?"

"X minus Y into X squared plus XY plus Y squared," I rhymed back at him.

"Good man," said he, handing me a poke of bulls-eyes. "You'll be a scholar yet. I'll make either a priest or a stock-broker out of you, according as God directs me."

He handed me mother a bottle of Irish, winked knowingly at her and went singing into the little parlour.

"Hot water and cut a lemon and hurry," shouted me mother felicitously. And we all busied ourselves around her in an atmosphere of relief and happiness.

It was at this moment that our nearest neighbour, Mrs. Mullin, came in surreptitiously and caught me mother excitedly by the arm.

"Mrs. Grady," said she, "I have a terrible bit of news for you. St. Michael's after landin' home to me, and he's as full as a piper!"

"God bless your soul," answered me mother, "go and have a peep at St. Peter singin' in the parlour!"

They clinked their glasses of hot punch.

"Praises to God for sendin' us the wee drop again," said me mother.

They are all dead or scattered now, and as I raise this drop of Irish malt to my lips, I drink to them in the long ago.

PIARAS O'CARROLL

THE EXILE

THE DOCTOR HAD SAID HE COULD GO OUT FOR A BIT TO-MORROW—and this was to-morrow. It came flooding into his head as soon as the night-nurse called him at six o'clock.

"Come on now, Mr. Malone," she said, "the others are awake. What sort of a sleepy head are you! Sit up there and wash yourself."

Pulling himself up with exaggerated slowness, he began, "Ah! Nurse, I'm very"

But he stopped suddenly. Through force of habit he had nearly said he slept badly and didn't feel well. But he realised in time that it might affect his chances of going out. He closed his mouth—he must watch himself carefully till about eleven. They might let him go then or maybe not till after dinner. It was all so uncertain. They didn't seem to realise how important it was to get out.

When he had washed the sleep out of his eyes he looked about at the other two beds. Heavey was lying back smoking a cigarette ("You shouldn't smoke before breakfast, Mr. Heavey, it's bad for you.") and looking quietly about the room from observant heavy-lidded eyes.

"Feeling any better, Mr. Heavey?" he asked.

"Not too bad. I've no pain now; but of course"

"Ah, you'll be alright. You're over it now," interrupted Reilly, from Cavan, who reclined as always in a Buddha-like posture on his pillows. "Not like me! I was awake all night with them pains again. Terrible! Terrible!" He looked coldly straight in front of him out the window, as if seeing the pain in the middle distance.

Heavey took a slow pull from his cigarette, keeping to himself his opinion of Reilly's pains.

"Tch! Tch!" exclaimed Malone. "Can they not do anything for you?"

"Wouldn't you think they"

Reilly began, but was interrupted by the entry of a nurse. Malone was always the one to save the situation—

"Yes, I thought I felt you stirring in the night, Mr. Reilly. I suppose you had the pains again?"

"Oh, indeed! He kept us going all night," said the nurse as she went about emptying the basins and returning them to their tidy position on the wash-stand.

"I kept myself going too!" retorted Reilly with some heat. "D'you think I do it for fun!"

The nurse came towards him, saying, "No, of course not! We understand—we do our best for you."

Reilly, mollified, lay back again. Another nurse came in and they began to tidy the beds before going off duty. Malone recognised his chance to get out of bed for half an hour or so even before one of them said to him, "Well, grandfather! Are you going to get up while we do the bed?"

He was sitting up, fitting his feet into his boots before they reached his bed. He walked slowly across the room, his boots flopping loosely, and took his dressing-gown from the wardrobe. It was new, and its light colour did not suit his white hair and flowing white moustache. It was short for his great height.

He stood at the window. Trim lawns and flower-beds outside looked clean and swept in the dawn. He glanced up with a countryman's coldly observant eye at the bit of sky to be seen between the roof-tops.

"I'm thinking this will make a good day. That's a good sky."

He waited to hear one of the nurses behind him say something confirming he would be going out. But Heavey spoke instead, "'Tis indeed a good sky. I hope they'll get to save my hay today. They tell me it's cut."

"How do you know but it's raining in Roscommon, man!" came from Reilly. "Where's the use in worryin' about your hay while you're here!"

Heavey stubbed out his cigarette.

"Isn't it my living—how can I help thinking about it!"

"A farmer can never stop thinking about his work," announced Malone for the benefit of Reilly, who was a shop-keeper.

"Apparently not," said Reilly under his breath. Malone did not hear him and continued, "I'm at it now for over fifty years and I know. When I'm not in the fields I'm thinking of them. It kills me to be cooped up in here, especially as I'm well able to get about now."

Again he waited for a nurse to remind him that he'd be going out—but they were talking quietly to one another as they pulled at the clothes on Heavey's hed and not listening to the men's talk.

"You don't look a bit like a farmer," Reilly pointed out. And he didn't. His face was thin, almost ascetic; not that of an outdoor man. His hands were long and fine.

"I can't help that," he retorted rather shortly. He was a little out of temper. Reilly was very trying. Of course you must make allowances; the man never slept with those pains. But all the same he was another of the trials of that place. He wished he was out of it and home. The nurses wouldn't even say a word about going out. And he wasn't going to ask about it and risk being refused like a small boy. And it was still only half-past six—there were two solid hours till breakfast. God!

He got his pipe and began to cut a fill of tobacco. The nurses went out of the room and there was the hopeless grey silence of early morning. He didn't want to smoke, but he lighted the pipe. There was nothing else to do. You'd go mad altogether.

Presently a nurse came in with a notebook and raised some

hope as she went about asking what they would have for breakfast. Reilly was restricted to Bengers's food: Heavey just said, "I will so," when asked if he'd have porridge and a boiled egg. She asked Malone the same question after telling him he shouldn't smoke before breakfast. He felt he'd like bacon again; it was three days since he'd had any. So he asked "What else can I have?"

"There isn't anything else," said the nurse quite seriously. He took his pipe out of his mouth to laugh. The nurse became a little embarrassed when the three men roared laughing and she murmured, "There's toast and marmalade, but men won't want that." Then she joined in the laughter and went out, telling them to be good boys.

The day-nurses appeared shortly afterwards. They always brought an air of hope—it was another day—the night was gone. You could smell breakfast being cooked downstairs. When he finished his pipe, Malone leaned back on the pillows. He had to be wakened up when breakfast was ready nearly an hour later.

When it was over and cleared off he lay back smoking again, and wondering what was the best time to get up. It was always necessary to be diplomatic. If you didn't ask at all you might be left there be damned. And if you asked too much or too soon they spoke to you like a child asking for a toy that he wasn't supposed to have. Most of them were too young to be tactful; except the staff-nurse in the day-time, who was always soft-spoken no matter what she had to say. She was tall and had some inner spirit which enabled her, though speaking gently, to dominate the room. Malone recognised that she had breeding. She sometimes made him regret the forty or so years between them.

She came into the room about nine, when Heavey was asleep and the screens were around Reilly's bed. Malone called her.

"Well, Mr. Malone, you're greatly improved, I think."

"Yes, indeed nurse, I'm perfectly well. I think some fresh air would do me good—and a little exercise. The doctor said . . ."

"Oh yes! You were to go out for a little. Well—whenever you like. Would you care to wait till after eleven?"

"Of course, Nurse! I'll wait till then."

He wanted to say more, to talk away his excitement. But he closed his lips firmly. A word too much might spoil everything—he must be cautious. The nurse went on. "You'll have sunshine when you're out I think"

"I won't be worrying about that as long as I am out."

She went away. The others were still behind the screen with Reilly. Cautiously he got up and took his clothes, crumpled, from the locker, where he insisted on keeping them. He had been up each day for four days now, but he still couldn't get over a strange feeling of guilt every time he dressed. He was always expecting to be driven back to bed.

When he was tucking his shirt inside his trousers he glanced across and met Heavey's quiet eyes looking steadily at him. It gave him a guilty start

"Going out today, Mr. Malone?"

He wanted to say "Sssh!" and motion to the nurse. But he restrained himself and just nodded vigorously several times.

"You're a lucky man, so you are!"

He put on his dickey and his jacket and went to the wardrobe mirror to comb his hair. He saw how crumpled his clothes were from lying in the locker, and how loosely they hung about him.

He sat down at the table in the window and wrote a letter to his daughter telling her he was getting out today. He didn't say he'd be home. That could wait. It would be a surprise for her if he walked in off the seven o'clock train that evening. He'd be there before the letter if he went.

His eyes came slowly up from the table and stared out the window, but he did not see the trim gardens outside. He saw instead the rolling fields of Corrowore on the shore of Lough Mask. He could hear the corn-crake sound of the mowing machine and smell the hay. That evening, perhaps. He might be there that evening. He could have his coat off and take the long rake.

The sound of the nurses moving the screens awoke him from his reverie. He pulled his thoughts together. It would be many a long day before he could handle a hay-rake. Any anyway, his daughter's husband was doing it all by machinery now. The long rake had not left the barn rafters for years.

He leaned back against the loose cushions in the grand-father chair, looking at the flowers outside and listening to distant sounds of traffic. He felt at peace. Another hour and he could go out.

The man came in with the papers. When he had read all three, the girl came around with the milk and biscuits and he knew it was eleven o'clock. He couldn't take any—he was too excited. He got his hat from the wardrobe and put it on. Then he took out his shower-proof coat to hide the wrinkles in his suit. Going down the stairs he met the staff-nurse.

"Oh! Mr. Malone, are you going out already! Don't forget to be back for lunch now—one o'clock."

"Alright, Nurse. I'll be back."

She looked keenly at him, "You're feeling alright now, I hope."

He moved a few steps down as if to get out of reach, "I'm as fit as a fiddle, as fit as a fiddle!" and he went down quickly.

Then he was outside standing on the steps in the sunshine, his heart rejoicing. He stood there a while watching the cars streaming up and down and stopping at the traffic lights. He watched the lights changing and tried to make out how they worked. But he gave it up in bewilderment. Then a bus came along, roaring, and another. He loved the noise and colour of it all, the movement. He was out in it at last, free to taste it, no longer cut off inside. He didn't know where to begin!

Down the street he thought he could see the taxis they were talking about. That must come first anyway. He went along the footpath; people seemed to be in a great hurry. He had to cross

the street so he waited until there was a gap, and then ran across. But he could see the haste was unnecessary because nothing came until long after he had crossed. His heart pounded from running.

He was nearer now and could be sure they were the taxis. A group of men were playing cards on the running-board of one. He framed what he would say—how much to go to Westland Row station, and would there be a taxi ready to bring him any time. He didn't want to go home just now, but would like to feel the way was open whenever he took the notion.

But before he reached the taxi-men he became aware of a railings on his left and trees inside. That must be the park they told him about. He came to a gate and paused—the taxi wasn't so urgent after all and he was a bit puffed out after running, so it might be as well to go inside and sit down. He went in, and along a maze of paths till he came to a circular place with seats all round and a fountain. It was like some gentleman's garden.

He sat down. There were crowds filling the seats and walking past, and many children climbing and playing around the fountain. The seat he was on became very fully, till there was little comfort. Laboriously he took out his pipe, filled it with plug, and lit it. A woman on his right turned her face away and coughed. But he didn't notice that until a few moments later she got up and walked off, throwing angry glances back over her shoulder. It was only then he realised the pipe had driven her away. He was glad of the extra space. He turned to a young man beside him and couldn't help saying, with a touch of bravado, "Now we'll have more room!"

"Aw, yes," came the reply, "the oul' pipe is a great man!"

"'Twas always great to hunt flies and women," said Mr. Malone. The young man laughed but didn't speak and it was only then Mr. Malone saw there was a girl just beyond the man and they were sitting very close together.

He pretended to become suddenly very interested in a bed of tulips on the other side of him, and was careful to blow the smoke that way. After about five minutes, he felt an impatient urge coming over him. He didn't want to waste his time sitting there—it was little better than being inside. He got up, explaining to the young man, "I'll go and stretch my legs a while," and walked away along an avenue lined with flowers and trees. It was like paradise, with the brightness of the flowers and the smooth cut grass. But somehow he felt a little uncomfortable about it. This park must be the only piece of land for miles around that hadn't houses on it—and here it was, done up for show, no use for anything only strollers and idlers, or old invalids like himself. He felt there was something wrong about it.

He came out through a big corner gate, and saw again the traffic lights, and the nursing-home across the road. He was filled with a sudden desire to get away quickly—there seemed to be scores of windows looking down at him. He struck out across the street, and a car swerved and pulled up with a screech of brakes. But he went on unheeding. Nothing mattered—he had the whole

of Dublin spread out before him, and nothing else to do all evening but walk about and enjoy himself. For a moment he wondered if he were going the best way. But then he realised that that didn't matter because he could walk the whole town anyway.

The pavement was wide and clean, and white in the blazing sun. He sauntered along, letting the heat soak into him. There were very tall houses of bright red brick on the far side, so warm-looking that they seemed to be silently drinking up the sunshine. A long building of white stone stood back from the road on the right. It had three massive gates—the full length of the street. He stood a while wondering what it was, and though he couldn't guess, he felt pleased to stand there looking at it. As he was going away he saw a notice near the front steps and he went right in the gate to see if it would tell him anything. But it just said, "No bicycles."

He came out chuckling at how he had been fooled, and as he walked he kept turning his head each way in his eagerness to see everything. Then there were high red-brick houses on both sides. He wondered how people could be going up and down all those stairs, and thought they must be very big gentlemen to live in such big houses. Across the street there was a notice outside the end house—but he wasn't going to be fooled again so he didn't cross to see it.

At the end of that street he paused, wondering whether to turn right or left, until a railway bridge on his right drew him in its direction. Reaching it he stood underneath in the damp stony gloom. It was the widest bridge he ever saw. He was trying to guess how many trains could go over it together, when he heard one beginning to rumble across and he stepped out smartly.

There was now a busy street of shops in front of him and with many others opening off it. He went slowly, looking at the windows. There was a laundry, and then a window full of fruit and sweets. He glanced across the street and thinking he saw books in a shop over there, he stepped off the path to go across.

But he had to jump back quickly as a 'bus came careering around the corner straight for him. He made several further attempts to cross but finally gave up, and continued along the side he was on.

It was very hot.

He went straight ahead at the next side street. But this time he was careful not to look up or down so that he wouldn't seem foolish hesitating and jumping back. He got across but was a little out of breath, and his heart was thumping. He wondered if he was over-doing it. He mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

There were still shops along both sides—but they seemed to be all full of fruit and flowers, and one had nothing but cakes and buns. He saw no hardware—no ropes or scythe-stones, or handles for spades and the like. There were no sacks of flour or meal, nothing a farmer would want. It was a strange place, very different from home.

He had often been in Dublin before, but never had time to walk through it slowly like this, and see it closely. He stood now

on the kerb and watched the traffic. It seemed to have increased in the previous five minutes—especially bicycles. There were crowds of them now, swerving and tearing along in a hurry. And cars, new and shiny, streaming past endlessly. It made him tired to look at them. It was incredible that this could go on every day. How could they stand it? Where were they going to? Was there no one else like himself that had time to stand still for a minute.

He was thirsty. And he began to get a headache from the glare of the sun on the shiny cars and bicycles. He looked all around for a public-house, but none was in sight. If only he were at home, he could step into Burke's, and Pa in his shirt sleeves, would draw him a bottle, and lean on the counter to talk as he drank.

But that was far away now. Though he could still see no pub he felt sure there must be one somewhere near. But just then he remembered he had left all his money on the locker in the hospital and had none with him. He put his hand in his pocket and confirmed it. He also remembered the carafe of water standing on his locker. He wished he was near it now. Or the bucket of spring water behind the kitchen door at home. This was a dry, dead place—he began to wonder why he had come out in it.

He went on rather slowly past the last side street, and found himself in a road where the houses were mostly old and discoloured, and had sad-looking gardens behind railings. There were trees growing out of the foot-path, tired little trees; and you couldn't see how they ever lived there at all with the dust and the drought of the baked streets.

The soles of his feet were sticking to his boots and he was very thirsty. If only he could go into Burke's, or Lydon's! But they were far away. In this place there were only dusty trees and bare dead gardens. They were so depressing, so hopeless; no life in anything. Except the thundering buses and cars that kept roaring past all the time till his head was moidhered.

He paused for a moment on the foot-path and began to fill his pipe. He wasn't inclined to go any further—it must be all the same no matter how far you went. And neither did he want to go back. People kept brushing past so he went to the railings and stood with his back to them. He was glad to lean back against them.

He lighted his pipe, and stood there, letting the people and traffic form a meaningless blur in front of his eyes. He let his mind away to the fields of Corrowore, now heavy with the harvest. He stood in the big meadow leaning on the rake and looking away across the lake to see if there was any cloud on the hills that would threaten a shower before the hay was up. He ran his eye south along the hills to where Mountrasna and Benwee, showing jagged faces in the sun, towered over the little fields of Cappanacrehá and Shrahnalong, now half lost under the haze that shimmered across the lake.

He stood there a long time with his back to the railings, thinking of Corrowore and the sky over it.

His pipe went out.

JOHN V. KELLEHER

A DIG AT TARA *or*, THE PROPER CONSERVATION OF GLORY

Poor high-king Leary is buried standing up
In Tara's outer rampart with his face
Set south towards Leinster and his choice of foes.
A bolt of lightning stopped him on his toes
As, urging on his plunder-hungry race,
He charged all Leinster through the cow ford's muck,
And he fell flat and was no more the king.

It was a secret weapon Leinster had—
A surprise to them as much as to himself.
It seems they called the eastward mountain shelf
Scotland, or Alba. The joke was not too bad,
Seeing those rocks grew scarcely anything
But hunger, bog, and heather. A fertile hill
Beyond the streamlet west was Éire, Ireland—
A natural enough completion of the jest.

Once Leary had put his druids to the test
With, where in foreign parts or in his sireland,
Did omens say he'd meet his final ill.
They killed and skinned a bull and in the hide
Boiled the bull's flesh in the bull's own broth ;
Then the arch-druid ate and drank and drank and ate
Both broth and meat till he was bloviate
And couldn't stand. They wiped him with a cloth
And wrapped him in the skin, well stupefied.
Reverent, they laid the bundle on the slope
Below Tech Midchúarta and stole away.
His Lordship suffered agonies all night
In rawhide prisoned, bound and wound too tight
To budge, that he should dream aright. Towards day
He sneezed. His deacons ran, undid the rope,
And raised him to his feet. "The King!" he said.
And Leary came pacing swift across the dew
To where the seer, supported by deans two,
Stood sweating consommé. He raised his head,
"Your fate, my king, is limited in scope—
Through ghostly mists all night I saw me range
O'er mountain crags and fens, down fairy mounds,

In graves, through tarns, across the dark earth's disk,
 And shunned no peril, left unfaced no risk
 Of soul, or closed these ears to dismal sounds
 Would laymen's blood constrict. Sire! strange
 Emblems of pain . . ." But Leary stopped him short,
 Impatient, having heard all this before
 On similar occasions. "What's my fate?
 When shall I die? What spot is designate?
 Tell me, and I'll avoid that plain or shore
 And make that hour, gravid with death, abort."

The druid heaved a slightly weary sigh.
 All kings are alike: they won't or cannot learn
 The clearest oft-repeated truths of myth—
 As if all Leary's royal kin and kith
 For centuries past had not bid druids warn
 Against the hour or place should see them die.
 When would kings learn such truth's a sort of lie . . .

"O dreadful prince, your greatly mourned-for sire,
 Niall son of Eochy son of Muireadach,
 Stopped an arrow by the Isle of Wight.
 'Twould seem you too should keep from sea or bight.
 In dream I saw a cloudy, muddy loch
 Where drifted curious oghams traced of fire,
 'Éire,' 'Leary,' 'Alba'—then a sword,
 Also of fire, flashed once, and all was dark.
 I saw no more, no other sign. The sense
 I think is clear. No javelin hedges dense,
 No wall of shields, no palisade of stark
 Sword edges . . ." Leary snapped, "I've got the word.
 I guessed it right away. It's I between
 This land and Scotland with a king's sword stuck
 Into my guts—quite likely from behind.
 Allies are shifty, father bade me mind.
 I'll not ally or fight with Scots. There's luck
 And loot enough at home where plains are green.
 To hell with the Scots! Leave Britain to the Pict!
 Leinster for me! There's massive tribute owed
 From there, and owed again and overdue.
 They held off Dad and Granddad; now they'll rue
 Their saving ways. It's time the hills were showed
 Tara is master. Plunder is south, lads! Let's collect!"

He sloped off shouting to the shouting crowd.

The druid shrugged: As stupid as a king!
 He solves a vision like a children's riddle.

Well, wherever it be, we'll know that middle
 When he gets in it. I said no battle ring
 Will save him from the fire, the mud, the cloud.
 It won't. But what's the use? Why lecture fools?
 That Bealtaine Eve the fire was lit at Slane
 By half-starved Patrick and his dingy crew,
 I warned him then. I told him what was true;
 Put that blaze out; the chance won't come again.
 Put them out, too, or kings will be their tools.
 That blaze will wither all your fathers knew,
 Drive Boann from the Boyne and empty Dowth,
 Level your house at Cletty. Words to the wind!
 That crown, that helm, that skull enclose no mind.
 Well, Patrick's in the north—he'll soon be south,
 Then west, then east again. Nothing's to do . . .
 Back to the court . . . What did it really mean?
 Was it a loch or just a muddy brook?
 'Twas water right enough—the sea I doubt.
 Ach, let the big fool's finish spell it out.
 We both forgot the hour. I'm feeling shook.
 He's got the words—let him act out the scene.

So Leary harried Leinster year by year,
 Winning and losing turn by turn about,
 Till they captured him in battle at Kildare
 And made him vow by sun and cloud and air
 He would stop the fuss. Before a year was out
 He was back again advancing his career.
 What did he care for vows, a clever man
 Who had riddled out the secret of his fate?
 Come spring, the thirtieth of his bully reign,
 He was lifting Leinster cows on Liffey's plain
 And welcoming in the year Four Fifty Eight,
 When word came rearward from the questing van:
 Big herd southeast, well guarded, moving fast
 Toward the mountains, headed for the ford
 At Caiss. "There's tribute," Leary yelled. "Come on!"

The rest we know. No need to dwell upon
 The obvious doom of an over-cocksure lord.
 Who turns a deaf ear first is deaf and dumb at last.

But that was not his last mistake. His will,
 After bequests, read, " . . . bury me upright
 In Tara's outer rampart with my face
 Set south towards Leinster. That ignoble race
 Who robbed me of my tribute in mere spite
 Shall feel my cowering glance upon them still."
 It was done, of course; and Leinster didn't care.

What's one more curse where curses lie by dozens
 So thick they cross and cancel out each other?
 Was it a curse that this king maimed his brother,
 While the next was done in by his royal cousins?
 Kings were the curse, but expendable as air.
 Meanwhile Saint Patrick ravaged all behind,
 Destroyed forever all that Leary stood for,
 Toppled the grand old gods, ended their day;
 And Leary's skull stared sightless at the clay,
 Irrelevant. But that's all it was good for:
 A tribute to a better hero's mind.

His last mistake? There's always one to cap it.
 A wise king should conceal his burial site.
 Not lest his enemies should dig and scatter
 His bones in dung—sure, that would hardly matter,
 It has always been a sort of royal rite.
 But now, if his skull is found, the diggers snap it
In situ with a Leica, then pour wax
 Inside and out to hold the thing together;
 And when it's prepared, shellacked, and on the table,
 Undo its secrets—oh, those men are able—
 With sand and tape. They soon determine whether
 His interangular frontal parallax
 Was normal or his basion-nasion sound;
 His cranial capacity, if any,
 Is read in base chords, orbits, arcs, and planes—
 Talk about picking other people's brains!
 They exhume his other bones, however many.
 They rebuild him from the cowlick to the ground.
 Then his record's published to the last cedilla,
 And there's nothing left for bright romance and story
 But an "old male, five foot five, arthritic joints,
 Caries, short shins, and few noteworthy points."
 Take heed by Leary, kings. Control your glory
 By ditching all the evidence—like Attila.

Attila's the king who really kept his stake.
 They turned the Danube's course to make his grave,
 Heaped in such lavish plunder he should lack
 Nothing forever, then let the waters back,
 Effaced the by-pass ditch, and left the wave
 To whisper a secret none should ever break.
 None shall. His men had made a lucky error,
 Not knowing what the first spring flood would do
 By way of scooping out the river bed,
 So a few months later loot and royal dead,
 All mixed with rocks and silt, went down the flue.
 No tape will span Attila's skull and terror.

PATRICIA HUTCHINS

DANIEL CORKERY, POET OF WEATHER AND PLACE

I HAD LEFT THE BEACH AT BEXHILL ON THE FIRST DAY OF CONVALESCENCE there, to look for some rope-soled shoes. In one of those mahogany, three-sided trays which once served large dinner tables and now hold the remains of literary menus—thick-paper poems, theosophy, bee-keeping, one volume of an encyclopaedia—was a copy of *The Threshold of Quiet*. It had been in a library in Sackville Road in the town, name suggestive of its Irish period, and someone had pasted on the fly-leaf a little review, quoting one of Ireland's best known book-lovers as saying, 'This remarkable book, etc., etc., . . . leaves an impression of simple sincerity.' Yet this had not had much effect, for the volume, marked 1946 printing, was practically new and I might have it for six-pence. Bexhill is not as vulgar as most of the South coast towns but few of its readers go as far as Cork, imaginatively speaking.

I had with me Helen Gardner's book on *The Art of T. S. Eliot* but could not 'get on with it' just then and had recently finished William Sansom's excellent but rather over-stimulating novel *The Body*. Returning to the brightness of the sea and flint-yellow, warm-feeling shingle, Corkery's story of grey, damp-walled lanes and half-country outskirts of what we as children always called 'the city,' was one of those tunnels back to the world which we need after illness.

The style was slow-moving at first, many of the impressions too colourful in a William Morris way, but the people and their problems were real and I soon became involved in them—Martin Cloyne who could not push himself against life enough, Stevie Galvin with his love of gadgets and hobbies hiding an empty space in him, the boy Finnbar and his sister. Perhaps what made me continue, lazy as I felt, was 'that psychic sense of place,' to put it in the words used by Corkery of Synge. Here was a writer who could draw out of houses and streets and rooms some of the states of mind experienced there, and if the book as a whole is a description of 'lives of quiet desperation' it remains a valuable psychological assessment of its period.

A quotation will show the rather indiscriminate use of words and Corkery's observation of small but effective detail:

Lily Bresnan's nook on the hillside was an autumn lyric, mellow and glad, a sweet music that needed no heightening, no enriching, while that gentle girl, earnestly bent upon her task, lingered in the

sun. She put the thread between her teeth and then broke it. With a little clatter the scissors fell upon the dappled ground. There it remained. A robin, quite suddenly, winged across her, and was lost in the sun-flushed foliage. Stitch, stitch, without hurry. The garment was held up and examined. She stooped and her fingers, but not her eyes, searched for the fallen scissors.

I had, of course, read *The Hidden Ireland*, which had defined and given form to something we had felt in our bones, known in scraps, understood emotionally but never before realised as a whole. In it Corkery's knowledge of Irish history and his great sense of interpretation had made a highway through land which had not been considered before. Since it appeared in 1925, hundreds of roads and little paths and tracks have been made through its forests and mountains, but the book still holds the initial, self-deprecatory effort and the unifying strength of Corkery's vision.

Going back to London and then in Ireland again, I sought out Corkery's other work. *A Munster Twilight* appeared in 1916, a year before his novel, and the collection shows him at a stage when the short story form was not quite in his control. Some are a paragraph or an explanation too long; the hard twist isn't always left in the rope. For instance, *The Ploughing of Leac na Naomh* is a fine re-creation of the quiet cold of snow broken by the mad, poetic gesture of the fool who ploughs the ledge of land by moonlight. But Corkery is not yet able to hold his theme until the end. At times in his book, and this is the danger of lyric writing, there is a minim of emotion too much.

Yet in each attempt there is that already skilled depiction of background, whether it is a 'sculpted-out shell in the Kerry hills, an evil looking place, green-glaring like a sea when a storm has passed,' or the tall, dark lodging houses, the lanes of crowding masonry in the city, a farm on the Blackwater of 'deep, well-fattened land which ran over with prodigality.'

Most of the sketches are based on a sense of weather, season; even when he is dealing with people whose whole lives have been spent in the streets of Cork one is aware of them moving through sunshine or hurrying under the rain. See how in the story of the woman who waits for the body of her child to be found in the river, this deepens and holds together the tension;

I lingered by her for some time, and remember noticing how you would not remark the sun shining on the water if it wasn't for the boat and the men in it. On them alone it seemed to shine, on the boat, the men, and on the white bright drops of water that were falling from the rope as Jack Heffernan hauled it in or dragged it along. But when you raised your eyes, there was the statue of the Blessed Virgin on the Dominican Church shining like gold, and beyond it and above it was Shandon Steeple shining, too; and all the windows in the houses on that closely-built hillside were flashing back the sun in signals or burning like flares. It was a golden sunny evening.

Corkery had not found the right compromise between straight-

forward dialogue and an attempt to suggest accent and intonation but later he arrives at a means whereby the Gaelic construction shows through the English. Nor at times is he afraid to make or change a word. 'The best books in every language,' he wrote, 'contain a far greater number of those unbookish words than the weak words, it is the use of them that tests a creative writer and it is by such tests we note how slack is the creative impulse in the internationalists.'

We take away with us the description of the fight between the sailor and the young man in *The Return*, the *Child Saint* with his treasures, the cobbler and the contented blind man and of course Maggie Maw. 'Very quietly she would come in; she always came in very quietly—passionate people are either dead or blazing.'

The Hounds of Banba (1920) in which Corkery is chiefly concerned with 1916 and after, contains the observation, 'When the heart opens at all, it opens to the cold winds as well as to the kindly sun.' Throughout these stories there runs the pity of the man who can understand the motives behind violence but can never be wholly with it. Nan Twohy doubts her part in encouraging the young men in their fight; the picture of Colonel Hastings, his son dead in France, the mad officer MacGillicuddy haunted by the brutality of empire-making and maintaining, are cries against the entanglement of it all. How well the ludicrous tragedy of war is suggested by the armoured car which has terrified and scattered the people in the square!

It was throbbing in the moonlight, in a pool of shadow; it seemed to look round to see where next it would make a spring. We saw two young heads rise above it. They laughed. They spoke.

In a moment or two Colonel MacGillicuddy rushes out and is killed by their rifle fire.

When I began *The Stormy Hills*, (1929) I was under the impression that this was a novel, for the first story, *The Return*, has all the possibilities of a longer work coiled within it. Yet perhaps Corkery has felt that he is one of those writers who cannot easily keep the ball rolling for a few hundred pages, whose interest is in an immediate situation. By now he was in full control of his material and discarded every unnecessary or flamboyant word. In the story mentioned above there is dancing in the kitchen and

... every now and then the father, John Renahan, without a word would plod slowly, bulkily, heavy footed across the room, disappearing into the dairy for something or other. Massive, silent, heavy featured, he thought but little of disturbing the laughing group in the middle of the flags. He would hulk through them in a straight line like a surly bull making through a herd of milkers. Without breaking the rhythm they would draw aside, lifting up their chests. They were so used to his ways that they took no anger from them.

Here the adjectives *massive*, *silent*, *heavy featured* coming after *slowly*, *bulkily*, *heavy footed* build up both a visual and onomato-

poetic effect in contrast to the rhythm and movement of the dances, the thoughts of the girl waiting for her lover to return.

In *Carrig an Afrinn* we have Michael Hodnett the farmer who had once come from the 'niggardliness of life' of a tiny stone-filled holding, now asleep in his armchair. Again the technique becomes onomatopoeic.

Just now, along that sun-drenched ledge, a procession of shapely cattle was moving from left to right, the beasts in single file or in pairs or groups, deliberately pacing. Thirty one milkers were to pass like that, making for the unseen bridgeway across the stream in the hollow. Presently they would dip from sight and again be discovered in the tree-covered passage trailing up towards the milking sheds, the rich sunshine catching their deep-coloured flanks and slipping swiftly and suddenly from their horns and moving limbs. Anyone who had ever come to know how deeply the sight of that afternoon ritual used to thrill the old man, now so sunken in his sleep, could hardly forbear from waking him to witness it.

Stephen Spender mentions in his autobiography *World Within World* that he often remembers the colour and emotion of a poem but not its words. In the same way Corkery seems to recollect the entirety of an experience and then gradually to give shape to it. In *The Lartys* he tells how a certain kind of music will bring the tale to mind, 'For if music teaches us to understand life, life itself teaches us to understand music.'

The Larty family lived in a house which 'clung to the headland as if by its four paws' and were always half making things but one year they build a boat which wins a regatta. It is hard to say just how it is achieved but over and through the whole story runs the sound and smell of the sea. It blows away the voices of those who rake the beaches for wrack, it roars across the arguments of the victorious brothers, some who would leave the boat on the strand, others who would shift her to safety. We hear 'in the darkness the waves passionately breaking themselves on the rocks or withdrawing precipitately back from the grasp of the narrow gullies.' Then, when the boat has slipped from them and is lost, there is the reaction from danger. In the shelter of some rocks

... we gathered like scared sheep, drenched, torn, winded yet safe—which was everything. I saw how anxious the sons were about their father, how they would make some excuse for touching him.

'Turn up your collar.'

'If you tied your scarf.'

And indeed we all felt like touching one another, like shaking hands foolishly with one another.

Later we come to the account of the wild night roaring outside while the Lartys in their crazy house recount the boat-race.

There came in some interval of the pother the wild cry of some foolish calf groaning, with stretched throat, with anxious eyes—we could picture it—but how little it all disturbed us, this hubbub with its wild crashes—if indeed it did not create in our spirits a warmth altogether beyond the glow of victory.

The Wager, describing a wild party in the days of the old gentry, had some of the romantic atmosphere of *Castle Rackrent*, but events are seen from deep within the Gaelic tradition. The old weaver who rises at night to work on and on whatever strange ride was undertaken, is, perhaps unconsciously, used as a symbol of its persistence. Father Reen in *The Priest* is part of a very different period. He had 'long since reasoned out that the time had come for the building up of a middle class, an upper class too, on native lines, to take the place of those that had failed.' Yet gradually he had withdrawn from the life of the village. A call of the kind he dreaded takes him into the hills.

My people! My people! he thought, so good, so sinless, even so religious, yet so hard, so niggardly, so worldly, even so cruel; and again he blamed himself for not starting, for not forwarding some plan or other—sports or story telling, or dancing or singing or reading or playacting—anything that would cut across and baffle that lust of acquisitiveness which everywhere is the peasant's bane.

When at last he succeeds in dislodging

... "a poor old peasant's handful of thoughts from that which has been their centre and stay for seventy or eighty years—the land, the farm, as he called it."

all Father Reen wishes is to escape from the place.

That terrible promiscuity of rock, the little stony fields that only centuries of labour has salvaged from them, the unremitting toil they demanded, the poor return, the niggard scheme of living; then the ancient face on the pillow, the gathering of greedy descendants—he had known it all before; for years the knowledge of how much of a piece it all was had kept his mind uneasy. He knew he would presently be asking himself 'Where do my duties end?'

And as he rides on and on

... It overwhelmingly leaped upon him, that question did, whenever he passed a lonely farm-house clung against its slab of protecting rock, at the base of a cliff, or espied one aloft on some *leaca* or other, betrayed to the night by the lamp still dimly burning. Each and everyone of them seemed to grab at his very heart pleading for some human succour that their inmates could not name. And all the time the hooves of his animal were beating out from the frozen road in perfectly regular rhythm: My people! My people! My people!

By 1939 when *Earth Out of Earth* appeared, Daniel Corkery had travelled far from the language of *The Threshold of Quiet*. Take, for instance, a paragraph from *As Benefits Forgo*t:—

She was a wild looking woman, who from her appearance lived more on the roads and in the fields than under the roof-tree. Her hair was strong, black, and was tangled roughly. Her skin was hard and dry with the weather. In her cheeks there were dark crimson stainings such as one sees on bramble leaves in November. Her eyes, under dark strong eyebrows, were a fierce blue. She was passionate, impulsive, wary yet reckless. Her cloak was pulled

tightly about her by the two fists hidden within it; the drag on it showed the meagre framework of flesh and blood. Her skirts went to the flagged floor, the same colour as it. One boot protruded from them, the same colour also.

The lyrical *dark crimson stainings* and the sudden description of character which follows, is balanced by the sordid tones of floor and skirt and boot. This tale also contains a passage or two about a fire and its aftermath which could not be bettered by Gorki, who was a potential incendiary if ever there was one.

In Corkery's stories there is little or no sense of the supernatural, strangeness comes from men's minds or the effect of landscape upon them. Like the earlier story called *The Stones*, this is particularly strong in *Death of a Runner*, in which a man is haunted by a horse he has killed. When he is found drowned the mood is early morning, with a heavy dew everywhere on ground that has dried in summer heat and 'the river flowed on, very gently yet alive, saying its say quietly, as it has been doing the live-long night.'

It is not often that Corkery moves out of Cork or Kerry but in *Strange Honey Dew*—not a very good title—he has described that area round the Liffey from Kingsbridge to O'Connell Street, decaying, nostalgic, certain only of its past. The old man who tells strangers of the businesses he has owned, only in imagination perhaps, is so much a part of it. I cannot go by without mentioning the priest in this story, so beautifully is he suggested in a line or two . . . 'a very humble looking, moody looking old priest.' 'He has a large and almost empty parish in the midlands, I thought.' Later he crossed the roadway and 'let his head hang, and fell at once into patient plodding, himself and his umbrella, as if miles and miles of bogland road lay before him.'

Maybe the mind is rather like a ciné-camera at work all the time whether we know it or not, memory being the developing and printing of its exposures. Corkery is often like the man who as he processes and then projects the film, is often surprised at what he finds there. The image of that 'patient plodding' is not a conscious observation so much as the reliving of an instant of time. In the earlier story he writes of the toss of defiance given by young men in court, 'I had never observed it until then, as I say, and I was quite unaware that it could be observed by me in my ordinary moments.'

We see this happening, with all his years of writing behind him, in a sketch taken from a knee level view, that of a small boy bundled up to go to the fair early in the morning. After the pigs are sold and they have had some food, his father leaves him. 'He waited. He was glad he wasn't in the big room where all the people were; you'd see the crumbs on their whiskers.' Later at the meeting where his father is speaking,

. . . . Then his father began to speak, turning again towards the crowd; he was now looking up along the table, looking almost at

himself ; yet Jimmy soon understood that though his father was looking in his direction he was not looking at him or anybody else or at anything else. It was queer. And everyone was listening. Jimmy's eyes ranged from face to face. Some of them frightened him ; they were cross looking, they were staring fiercely at his father, their mouths open. But his father was not cross looking at all ; he didn't mind them. His head was tilted very much, his brows were fixed, his eyes intent, he was looking at no one, just talking on and on, and although he was tapping the table with the corner of the box, tapping it very gently, Jimmy felt his father didn't know he had anything in his hand.

Then there are interruptions.

His father had taken no notice, kept silent for a moment, then went on talking, the box gently tapping the table. The boy was puzzled. The room was now quite still, listening. Suddenly his father stopped and said : 'That's what I think, anyway.' The boy saw him put the box this way and that way in front of him, staring at it, and at last take his hands from it slowly, carefully, and fold his arms and sit back.

I have perhaps made little reference to Corkery's power of conveying states of mind. In *Her Thank-offering* we are told of the young wife living near Howth, whose husband is seriously ill, and how she inhibited her memories of happiness 'with all her might' so that she might have courage to face the present. Very skilfully he builds up tension and then at the right moment, when our interest is completely caught by the atmosphere, he can gently leave it slacken and we share in a sense of warmth and gratefulness—one of those occasions, as he said in another context, 'when we see into the life of things.'

The little I have read of Daniel Corkery's poetry has meant nothing to me, all has gone into the prose; the plays, *The Yellow Bittern*, *The Labour Leader* and *Resurrection* are very simply and effectively constructed. 'Each was a thing in itself, occupying the whole of my mind while I was making it,' Corkery wrote in one of the prefaces. The poet dying, rejected by the hardness of the people, the king and hermit who symbolise perhaps the world and detachment from it, are figures and voices we do not forget.

In writing of Synge whose entire work but for *Riders to the Sea* is to his mind an apology for the daemonic in life, Corkery says :

It must be allowed that every artist is partial towards the daemonic. It is the principle that opposes the mechanical, the theoretic, it is the Greek mistrust of professionalism, it is in every man the root of honest laughter ; it is in every man the mirror of nature, answering its moods . . . Yet for all that, the greater artists have never shown anything but the deepest reverence for what Goethe used to call the earnest conduct of life, which, at its best when the daemon defuses it with warmth, becomes mere chaos when the daemon overloads it with no regard to any of the other powers within us. By so much do the greater poets differ somehow from the little terrible fry of the Bohemian *cánacles*, fanatics for theories, whether they know it or not.

I am not concerned here with Corkery's part in the revival

of the Irish language but the literature which has come from his concentration on the material around him. For many years a professor, he has not lived by writing so much as through it, nor has he attempted to reach the wider labour market which welcomes the 'wild gesse of the pen.' 'Unless a writer sink himself in the heart of his own people,' he wrote, 'he will never, let his own gifts be as they may, accomplish work of such a nature as permanently satisfies the human spirit.'

At the same time, Daniel Corkery's work has prepared the way for certain writers to live in Ireland and carry on a considerable export trade. Their stories and novels show that many of the day and night dreams of his period have taken on the hard and sometimes disagreeable shapes of reality. Father Reen, were he still alive, would see an Irish government and middle class, a people greatly improved in self-confidence and well-being, the once powerful families finally descended, where they are represented at all, to the same problems of earning a living as everyone else, while other groups consolidate themselves.

It was an important day for Irish writing when sometime before the first World War, Corkery stood with twenty thousand others to watch a hurling match at Thurles. 'It was while I looked around on the great crowd I first became acutely aware that as a nation we were without self-expression in literature.' The question he asked—if the possibilities suggested by Synge were to be followed or writing to remain 'colonial' or expatriate—had in that moment of dedication been answered. This is not to claim that Corkery has reflected more than certain aspects of Irish life, but his stories came at a time when comfort and a little praise for the best side was needed by a people trembling after war.

COIS CAOLAIRE

MAIRTIN O CADHAIN

Mr. Ó Cadhain is in the first rank of modern Irish writers.—"Scéala Éireann.

7/6 trí dhíoltóirí leabhar nó ó

SAIRSEÁL agus DILL, 11 Br. Gleannabhna, Baile Átha Cliath.

JAMES T. FARRELL

THE IRISH CULTURAL RENNAISSANCE IN THE LAST CENTURY

NATIONALISM—THE CONCEPT OF THE NATION—PERMEATES ALL IRISH thinking: it pervades Irish writing. However, one cannot interpret nationalism in Irish writing as though it were a hardened and unchanging conception. The concept of the nation, the precise character of nationalism in Irish writing, has gone through various changes in the course of the last hundred years.

In Ireland, disputes concerning propaganda and literature have been focused in terms of the national movement. In the politics of the national movement, there have been two tendencies, one which put the political question of national sovereignty first, and the other which stressed the social question. Figures representing these tendencies in the early 20th century were Arthur Griffith, the leader who played the key role in founding Sinn Féin, and James Connolly, the national martyr and social revolutionary. The difference here can be suggested in the question—which comes first, the national or the social question?

A difference somewhat parallel can be seen when we touch on the question of literature and propaganda. Do the political interests of the national movement, narrowly conceived, come before the interests of a literature created in pursuit of an image of truth? Can literature be judged in terms of a fixed national aim so that it is turned into a political hand-maiden?

Discussing these questions years ago in his book, *Principles of Freedom*, the late Terence MacSwiney, an Irish martyr, declared: "It is because we need the truth that we object to the propagandist playwright." It is this idea of an image of the truth which is denied by those who crudely apply political measuring rods to literature.

And it often happens that both sides in a political struggle—especially, perhaps, when this struggle breaks out in war and violence—will see literature in the same terms. Thus, in an investigation conducted by the British Government after the Easter Rising, a British official claimed, in his testimony, that the Rebellion might have been averted if the Abbey Theatre in Dublin might have had a longer period in which to influence the Irish people. This official saw literature and art in the same terms as did those whom Terence MacSwiney answered in the brief sentence listed above. He merely wanted literature to pour water rather than fire on the spirits of the Irish.

These remarks suggest the relevance of showing permutations in the concept of nationalism and of the nation as we find these in Irish writings. Here, however, there is only space for a few broad illustrations.

The democratic Young Irelanders of 1848 got their ideas from the Great French Revolution. To them, the freedom of Ireland, the creation of a sovereign Irish nation, meant creation of a political condition that would enable Irishmen to realize their dignity and individuality as human beings.

Men like John Mitchel, or the eloquent James Fintan Lalor who came after Mitchel and the other Young Irelanders, were fighting rebels. They opposed O'Connellism and Daniel O'Connell. John Mitchel and Thomas Davis were cultivated men. They represented a high level of taste and culture in the Ireland of their time. Davis, a ballad singer, critic and essayist, along with his contemporary, the poet, James Clarence Mangan, are two of the fathers of modern Irish culture.

Instead of holding to a narrow political conception of culture, men such as Mitchel, Davis and Mangan had a broader democratic one. Culture was, to them, an instrument which would help the Irish to gain a greater sense of their dignity and individuality as Irishmen.

D. J. O'Donoghue, editor of Davis' essays, wrote concerning Thomas Davis: "In a few words, he sought to impress upon Irishmen the fact that they had much to be proud of in their history and character, and he saw that the surest way to induce a nation to rise to higher things was to imbue them with the idea that they had accomplished much."

John Mitchel in an introduction to Mangan's essays declared that "fresh, manly, vigorous national songs and ballads must by no means be neglected" as one of the ways to be used in rousing the Irish national spirit. It must be stressed that these men were fighting rebels. To them, struggle meant the discovery of the road to manhood.

It is my opinion that the Irish cultural Renaissance is intimately bound up with resurgence of the Irish national spirit, the beginnings of Sinn Fein, the development of the modern Irish labour movement under the leadership of James Connolly and Jim Larkin, and the entire Irish movement in the post-Parnell period.

Following the defeat of Parnell, and the decline of his Irish party until it became a kind of political arena for Eloquent Dempseys, new orientations were gradually sought out. Politically, the new orientations were developed into so-called Connollyism and Larkinism.

There are no simple causes to be discovered and cited in an attempt to explain the Irish Renaissance. It grew out of a condition in the country. At the same time, it was influenced from without by tendencies from England and the European continent.

Fin de siècle esthetics and reflections of French symbolism were brought to Ireland by Yeats and Synge.

The plays of Synge were organized on terms which fit into the esthetic conceptions of men like Pater. Pater also influenced Joyce. George Moore carried into the Renaissance ideas of French naturalism.

Standish O'Grady, usually called the Father of the Renaissance, dealt artistically with the ancient Irish past. He presented the figures of the Irish legends on the Homeric level. A legendary Irish past offered the men of the Renaissance one of their sources of material. They went to the peasantry for speech and language and found among them—especially the peasantry of the west of Ireland—a basis for a language for poetry and for poetic drama. There were pagan elements in the Renaissance. In Yeats' poetry, for instance, definite pagan threads can be observed.

A number of these early figures of the Renaissance were Protestant. They were Anglo-Irish. To this day they and their successors have been criticised on the ground that they were not Irish, and did not reflect the Irish spirit. In terms of strict idea of nationalism which limits Irishmen to Catholics who do not have Anglican antecedents—at least back to the time of Cromwell—this criticism is justified.

But besides being narrow and parochial, it is unhistorical. The Anglo-Irish had all been in Ireland for a long time when the Celtic Renaissance was born. Their influences had become a part of the evolution of Irish history. The movement of these men of the early Renaissance can be interpreted as an effort on their part culturally to enter more fully into the life of Ireland. This is one of the features of the nationalism of the Renaissance.

This national cultural revival, based on the legendary past and on the language of the more economically and socially backward sections of the people, differs from the cultural ideas of the Young Irelanders of 1848. The latter conceived of the Irish as a people.

The characters of the early Irish drama are not a people, but a folk. Formally, the ideas and most of the work produced in the first period of the Renaissance was not political. Politics then didn't enter into this movement in the way that politics entered into the cultural ideas of the Young Irelanders.

If we consider Yeats' poetic drama, *Kathleen ni Houlihan*, we can, perhaps, note this difference more concretely. It is commonly known that when this play was first produced, there were riots. It aroused national resentment.

The lines spoken by simple characters in this poignantly poetic work, and the touching relation of these characters to Kathleen, their symbolic Mother Ireland, brings out the dignity and humanity in Irish peasants. The emphasis in the play is on martyrdom. In effect, *Kathleen ni Houlihan* calls on her

Irish sons to go out and die for Ireland. And, also, we see here that the humanized image of Ireland, created in poetic symbol, is that of an old woman, a sad old woman.

The play most certainly does not fit the cultural prescriptions of Mitchel and Davis. We see this more strongly if we keep in mind the fact that the most popular image of England is John Bull. Along with *Kathleen ni Houlihan*, the other images created in this period include legendary and pseudo-Homeric figures. Here is a permutation in the Irish national conception as this is mirrored in literature.

At a later date, Padraic Pearse, who was to be executed as a leader of the Easter Rebellion, wrote a play manifestly under the influence of the first period of the Renaissance. *The Singer* attempts to dramatize the same kind of a mood as does *Kathleen ni Houlihan*.

The figure of Kathleen is a symbol of a whole nation. The emphasis on martyrdom is generalised by Kathleen. When this emphasis is made in a figure less representative, the generalized mood does not grow out of the play. But the heroic martyrdom of Pearse should be a caution against those inclined to denounce these two plays on purely political grounds.

The creations of this period of the Renaissance—and most notably those of Yeats and Synge—are significant in another way. This work should not be measured by formal conceptions of nationalism, if one seeks a sense of its importance in Irish culture.

Before the Renaissance Irish culture was thin. Genuine work was largely overshadowed by the meretricious. The stage Irishman was often presented as the image of an Irish man.

Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory and their contemporaries helped bring a note of reality into Irish writing. Their characters have a dignity and a naturalness of their own. Their language bespeaks this dignity. They are real, not false. The reality in all Irish writing which followed them is in their debt. They introduced an image of truth into modern Irish writing.

'THE PROFESSOR'

AN OPEN LETTER TO HONOR TRACY

Dear Honor,

In the opening chapter of your book* you are adroit and lucid in your anticipations of the reception your book is likely to get. Many readers will agree that the pain Ireland has caused you has been successfully transferred. The pleasure will be shared by those who know least about this country.

I shall try to evade your categories and give you sincerely my own reaction. I am no infuriated son of Ireland, nor does the imagery of motherland appeal to me. To the romantics, Yeats included, Ireland was a bright young girl, Kathleen the daughter of Houlihan. She has never wedded. Ledwidge's poor old woman mourned not her sons but her blackbirds silenced by the fowler.

The Irishman's passion for Ireland is not filial but paternal, maternal even, if I may be permitted an Irish bull. And this, I think, is why Irishmen are so touchy about Ireland even while prone to criticise it themselves. A mother may slap her child for misbehaviour, but dislikes a stranger exclaiming: "What a sweet little girl, but isn't it a pity she is so deceitful. That oriental streak, of course."

What suggested this analogy was your description of your charming friend, Norah: "Hardly a stone was thrown in her valley, but she knew the reason why. I ascribe this happy circumstance partly to her study of the Middle East, for there is nothing like a knowledge of the orient to prepare one for Ireland; but whatever the cause it was a rare and splendid thing." Unhappily I do not know Norah, but I am convinced that she would be liked in Ireland even if she had never gone further east than Margate.

Romantic affection for a country sounds dotty and sentimental to a cosmopolitan like yourself. Among the countries, whether they display or conceal their charms, the cosmopolitan finds many a light o' love but never a sweetheart.

Before getting to more serious aspects of your book I would like to point out some pleasant minor inconsistencies. For instance you say the English like to think they are calm and prosaic whereas they are nervous and highly-strung. And some forty-five pages later you inform us that Sean O'Faolain "pulls on a pipe in a calm English way," the rest of us puffing furiously at our pipes when we are not brandishing them like blackthorns.

You remember the pub where you went to find old Mickey the fishing expert. It was closed for the Holy Hour, that is between two-thirty and three-thirty, and you gained entry only by a subter-

fuge. There was no need of subterfuge; afternoon closing does not apply outside the four principal cities—Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. I am pained that you should fall into error about a matter like this of which you should have adequate knowledge.

A generation ago a friend of mine remarked: "We Irish are no longer West Britons, but there is a danger of our becoming East Americans." Any cinema-goer or lunch-time listener to Radio Eireann must agree that his prophecy is on the way to fulfilment. A good Gael may watch American football at Croke Park, but if he goes to cheer Ireland against England at Lansdowne Road he is regarded in some circles as a traitor and a shoneen. What has all this to do with my book? you may well ask. Let me try to point out its relevance.

I have written it to show you that we are not all complacent about Ireland, nor do we hesitate to say unpopular things. Many of us are distressed by the more virulent forms of Anglophobia which are not all due to Partition. You discourage me not when you poke fun at the English who are enthusiastic about Ireland, but when you assert that we laugh at them behind their backs. I met scores of them year after year at Achill and have laughed with them but not at them, and they in turn found the Irish quite occidental. One exception I remember, a Derbyshire lady who found everything in Ireland "so Irish, so quaint." One day she returned to lunch convulsed with merriment. She had been for a walk on the beach and had found an old shoe. "It was so quaint." "Irish, probably, also," I said to her and she laughed some more.

Irish history is a legend, a myth you remark. I shall not refer to the ancient myths of Cromwell and the Penal Laws though a case could be made out for their existence. But there is one undoubted fact I would like to mention. A little over a hundred years ago gentlemen preferred ranches to rackrented tenants and the desire was duly implemented by wholesale evictions. A few of the victims remained in jobs on the ranches but the majority had to board the emigrant ship, a less comfortable craft than the mail-boat on which your nuns got sea-sick. It was no exaggeration in the Mark Twain sense when Gavan Duffy said he left Ireland a corpse on the dissecting-table.

Honor, what a supreme example of Ireland's dottiness! The old corpse had a kick in it. Never before has an Irish bull shown such bovine vitality. During the past century Ireland has survived everything from Sadlier and Keogh, the "Pope's Brass Band", to pictures of Gladstone in farmhouse parlours. Today cloud cuckoo-land has drowned the voice of the cuckoo with the noise of the tractor and the combined harvester. "Now you're threshing," says sculptor Seamus Murphy as I am writing this.

I wish to end on a more complimentary note. Your chapter on Cork has flattered me, never more than when you mention that I told long funny stories in Irish. How I wish that you were accurate. I loved your chapter on the Blasket Islands which recalled

to me so many pleasant memories of Dingle, the most bilingual town in Ireland. You should emulate Queen Elizabeth I, as we must now call good Queen Bess, and learn sufficient Irish not to welcome Shane O'Neill but to enjoy a drink in Foxy John's where you can order a drink in either of the two official languages of the Irish Republic.

And now that I have made my protests I will add, in what you would consider a typical Irish way, that I have enjoyed your book and look forward to what one of your reviewers calls, in a happy phrase, the pursuit of a saga in your company through the lanes that lead to Sunday's well.

Yours amicably,

'The Professor'

**MIND YOU ! I'VE SAID NOTHING. FORAYS IN THE
IRISH REPUBLIC. By Honor Tracy. Methuen, 12/6.*

Poetry Ireland 23

EDITED BY DAVID MARCUS

PATRICIA CONNOR *Death Of An Old Woman*

PHILIP IRVINE *Two Poems*

TEMPLE LANE *Bad Visibility*

ROBERT GREACEN *Song*

BERNARD SHARE *Landscape With Figure*

PATRICIA CONNOR

Death Of An Old Woman

(A Poetic Incident).

NAN O'FOGARTY: *A dying old woman.*

FERGUS O'FOGARTY: *Her husband.*

BREDA BURNEY: *An old friend.*

- Nan : Fergus!—I feel the cold
Splashing like icy water in my blood.
Pull up the covers close about my legs ;
My feet are bare.
- Fergus : God help us, Nan, sure aren't you muffled up
From head to toe with blankets and warm rugs?
- Nan : Fergus, my feet are bare, my feet are bare ;
And I can feel the chill.
- Fergus : Here, then ; I'll throw my coat across the bed
To keep the heat in you.
There! Now you'd better try to sleep
Till Breda comes.
- Nan : Breda? Is Breda coming here again.
- Fergus : She is.
- Nan : Breda Burney has red hair,
The shade of blazing flame.
But I have hair like silver sunlight,
Bright as the moon's reflection in a mirror lake.
- Fergus : She's wandering in her mind,

And that old jealous friendship is as fresh
As when the two of them were young and ripe,
And rivals for my love.

Nan : Breda Burney has brown eyes,
As soft as boggy dew.
But I have eyes like liquid jewels,
Green as the sullen seaweed by the ocean's edge.

Fergus : Green as the shadowed mystery of a faery wood.

Nan : Breda's lips are pouting pink,
And curved and cool and kind.
But I've a mouth of tender crimson,
Warm as the heavy, drowsing air of June.

Fergus : Yes, warm ; and soft, and sweetly full.
A mouth of melting joy
That gave me passion in the trembling night.

Nan : More than myself I gave ;
More than my yielding body under yours.
When pain was a leaping demon in my veins,
And torment tore my flesh in screaming shreds,
I gave to you our son.

Fergus : Desmond, who was our living proof of love.

Nan : But Breda Burney had no son, because she had no love.
No love, that is, but you within her heart,
And you were mine.

(Enter Breda Burney)

Breda : I got your message saying she was worse,
And came at once.

Fergus : Ah, Breda, I'm afraid she's going fast.
When night, like a great black spider from its web
Came creeping, armed with shadows, to devour
The sunny light of day ;
She suddenly began to fade away.

Breda : How are you, Nan ?

Nan : Did someone call my name ?

Breda : It's Breda—Breda Burney—your old friend.
Are you in pain ?

Nan : No matter now ;
Soon I'll be slipping forward from all this
Into the purple mystery beyond,
Where blood and sweat and sorrow are blank blows
That knock unheard upon the walls of joy
Is Desmond there ?

Breda : No—Desmond isn't here.

Fergus : God bless us !—No. We'll call him in a while.

Nan : Strange. But I thought I saw him stand and smile
There at the door.

- Breda* : No, Desmond wasn't here.
It was a dream you had.
- Fergus* : He'll come no more.
- Nan* : What's that I hear you say?
He'll come no more?
Ay, yes! For a moment I forgot!
He cannot come, of course.
Desmond is dead.
But when the dawn draws back the parapets of night
upon the sun
I'll go to him instead.
- Fergus* : She's raving ;
And her mind no longer knows the ties of time.
Eternity itself is in her eyes.
- Breda* : This house will be hushed and lonely when she dies.
Gentle she was ; she had a gentle way.
Kindness was kindled in her very soul ;
Her heart was satin-soft.
- Fergus* : The night is dying too.
Already in the sky the stars are dimmed,
Like aging eyes that lose their first bright spark.
And the wind is sobbing sadly in the trees,
Like a lost child astray upon the hills,
And frightened of the dark.
- Breda* : (*Moving to window beside him*)
And there a falling star slips into space
With sparkling grace,
And flickers out
- Fergus* : They tell me that's a sign
Another soul is winging on its way to God.
- Breda* : (*Returning to bed*) And that soul—hers.
- Fergus* : (*Starting*) Hers? Do you mean—she's dead?
- Breda* : As gently as a sighing breeze snuffs out
A fluttering candle flame
Her stealthy spirit has eloped with Death.
The Lord have mercy on her soul!
- Fergus* : She was a woman worthy of my love.
- Breda* : She was. I loved her too.
Although she took from me my every joy,
I could not blame her much.
She had a way of hurting people kindly
That took the sting from every pain she caused.
And sadness haunts my soul because she's gone.
- Fergus* : Bright wings have carried her beyond my reach,
And loneliness is aching in the air.
The creeping hands of sorrow hold my heart.

PHILIP IRVINE

To Valerie

Valerie alone of all the girls,
 here at St. John's Malone
 Valerie alone of all the girls,
 has overcome the world in which she lives.

This is a harsh world for schoolgirls—
 where snowdrop freshness, then the opening rose
 are in turn lost to drab school uniforms
 of dirty green or violent blue—yet one
 she overcome has, by the help of God.

She dresses, beautiful, for God ;
 and she loves dancing, dancing for God :
 and she loves gaiety, she is gay for God,
 and not afraid ; she loves deep things
 for God, and in life gives herself to serve.

Valerie alone of all the girls,
 here at St. John's Malone ;
 Valerie alone of all the girls,
 is free, and lives like God.

Lines For An Unknown Bride

The way you came so early,
 sweet lady, on a hot May evening,
 even the way you looked, while making
 plans for your wedding music with Mr. Adair :

These little things made me wish good luck
 for your wedding in mid-July, their magic
 told me you are of God, and that my wish,
 of luck, is nothing worth.

Your marriage bed will give joy to our God,
 for you are both at peace—you are above
 our rootless generation, full despised,
 who are afraid to give—it will be full
 of savours sweet, as scent of fresh-mown grass
 bourne by wine summer air—for there
 God love and spirits meet in fresh young bodies.

God will bless you : may He fill your house
 with children beautiful to be your wealth.

Note: Apologies are due to author and readers for three misprints which marred Philip Irvine's poem, 'For Ellen,' in *Poetry Ireland* 22. They occurred in lines 4, 5, and 20, in which the correct words should read, respectively, 'drive', 'pride', and 'horsemen'.

TEMPLE LANE

Bad Visibility

Summer lies derelict at the end of this lane.
 If I must venture down what shall I find?—
 mere carcasses : a wake-house : Crazy Jane
 cross-sectioning an obsolescent mind :
 and twenty co-crones skulking in black to pelt
 the normal interloper who may dare
 between siamese-cat sky and grass-bound air
 to prowl ground surface silenced as with felt.
 No, I'll be bold as sunrise . . . There—thanks be!—
 the duck-stream dredges through botanic cresses
 with one cast kettle factual on the edge ;
 and at Fear Corner itself, hilariously,
 red lords-and-ladies signal from the hedge
 their bright persistent lie to all dark guesses.

ROBERT GREACEN

Song

Only the elementals stay,
 All else must fall away,
 Time washes over night and day.

Only the errant memory of a face
 In the mind can hold a place,
 While time keeps up his steady pace.

Only the sea and land
 Never dissolve. Time will not stay
 But runs ahead to meet decay.

Time washes everything away.

BERNARD SHARE

Landscape With Figure

You were not here before : only a rose
To posy you, self-stylized in this room
Shuttered against you : rose no more in bloom,
Rose without scorn, rose cataplasmed, waxed
Into unmeaning, rose no more relaxed
Into the sway of life : you were not here,
You had no meaning : lover, darling, dear,
Words on another's pain : you forced no spring
On a defensive winter, maidenhead
Inviolable, dead.

Since dream begets you now, how can a key
Hold any lock, how can a morning be
Unmiseried ? Now hurdy-gurdy song
Girds armour to your image : you are strong
As the long night : darkroom-developed pain
Patterns itself upon the day's disdain,
Mars every meaning, cracks this house of cards
From floor to feeling. Now your lady limbs
Unman at every moment : now the rose,
Lazarus-livened, grows.

Call it sex, self, sybaritism, salve
For broken bonds—is this a safety-valve,
Blowing so brutally ? Every cushion claims
Your impress, every fluttering poster names
Your individuality : each move
Magics these Midas-riches : the rose teems
In brash fecundity : each new rue-day
Wears mourning for you, morning with love-play
Still-born, limb-lorn. Day yearns into a year,
And you not here.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE STORIES OF FRANK O'CONNOR.

Hamish Hamilton. 12/6.

Perhaps it is advisable to state at the outset that this book is not the collected stories of Frank O'Connor—no such luck! It is, instead, something less munificent but no less magnificent, and perhaps more intriguing—twenty-seven of the author's best stories chosen by himself. Of these, five are new, in that they have not appeared in book-form before—though readers of this quarterly will be familiar with one of them, *My Oedipus Complex*. The others are drawn from Mr. O'Connor's earlier volumes excepting *Guests of the Nation*, which is not represented. Among them is a further story which appeared in these pages, *The Idealist*, and also one called *Christmas Morning* which, it may be of interest to reveal, was written for *Irish Writing* but never reached its intended home owing to certain technical intricacies that control the short-story market and sometimes defeat both author's and editors' best intentions.

The stories are indeed well-chosen—there is not a poor or unsuccessful one in the lot. Some favourites may have been omitted but the collection, on the whole, illustrates each facet of Mr. O'Connor's art and it must be reckoned as one of the most distinguished books to come out of Ireland since the Literary Revival.

On the score of technique, Frank O'Connor's mastery cannot be gainsaid. There is no story-writer in English to-day who can better him for certain effects—none who can write so shamelessly tongue-in-cheek, who can pen such brilliantly alive and terse descriptions of people, who can reproduce so devotedly and truthfully the nuances of his characters' speech. It has been objected that his stories

can be fully appreciated only by an Irish reader; this is probably true, but no more true than a like charge made in respect of the stories of, say, Saroyan or Bates would be. The average non-Irish reader will notice no difficulty or loss due to, to him, the 'foreignness' in O'Connor's work. And anyway, surely the average reader of literature is imaginative enough to absorb the real 'feel' of a writer very quickly—give him five minutes with a page of Tolstoy and he should be able to think like a citizen of Russia (pre-Revolution!).

The best of Frank O'Connor is in all the stories of this collection, not excluding those dealing with love in Ireland which, it has been said, often encompass more than artistry, and are frequently too concerned with broad hilarity and, even, a desire to mock. Whatever basis there may or may not be for this criticism, it is nevertheless true that these stories are highly successful on the level of entertainment. But in regard to such a criticism, it should be added that a confusion of terms has led to a confusion of issues: the stories of Frank O'Connor which are said to show Ireland in a bad light do not deal with 'love in Ireland' but with sex in Ireland. The difference is important. Mr. O'Connor's stories about the former theme are all tender and moving (e.g. *First Love* in the book under review); about the latter they are the very opposite. What content of truth lies in the latter stories is something which would have to be left to an Irish Dr. Kinsey (God between us and all harm!) but those who think that O'Connor's stories of Irish sex-life are savage and vulgar should familiarise themselves with certain contemporary stories that uncover the same aspects of other countries. Putting *The Common Chord*, Mr. O'Connor's collection of 'love' stories against, say, *Memoirs*

of *Hecate County*, Edmund Wilson's collection about a certain American region, is like comparing a casual pickpocket with an international confidence-trickster.

Still, for the best of the best in Frank O'Connor's work, it is not to his sex-stories one should turn, but to the stories about children—those breathlessly-perfect and often heart-breaking tales like *My Oedipus Complex*, *The Pretender*, *The Babes in the Wood*; to the beauty and poetry of *The Bridal Night*; to the glowing, ember-like mastery of *The Majesty of the Law*; and to the love-fashioned 'In Memoriam' of a traditional Ireland that is now almost gone which bejewels every line of *The Long Road to Ummera*.

D.M.

THE FLOWER OF MAY by
Kate O'Brien.

Heinemann. 12/6

The Flower of May opens brightly with ironic humour—a Dublin wedding—and one is introduced to a lot of recognisable people. It is well done, and, as always with Miss O'Brien, one expects the settings that cling long after the narrative is hazy. She selects the details for her settings almost as tendery as a young girl might select something for her *trousseau*—Georgian graciousness, a quiet canal in Dublin, "Glashalla" in the country, the golden rocks, the sea, gardens, coach-houses, a sense of easy burgher dignity and dullness.

The Brussels-Venice episodes are rather slow, but around the middle the novel begins to mute: death comes on the scene. The emotional tension, the sense of death hovering, of life continuing, is handled both with poise and poignancy.

Of the characters, Fanny, the heroine, is undoubtedly the most interesting. She is an intelligent, enquiring young girl, full of contradictions, and with a sort of private morality. One remembers André too, a young man so conscious of his own charm that it continually seduces him. But one sees only his false charm and vulgarity, those aspects of the weak-willed and weak-minded which demand elegance and foppery to conceal the hidden torture, a torture undoubtedly there but

not in André's case alluded to. Yet Miss O'Brien says of Bill (a minor character): "He was always too cynical and too much in the wrong himself to be able to express anger against others." André likewise. He is simply a boulder, and therefore as pathetic as Bill, who is just a married, undistinguished sort of boulder, who occasionally insults his wife in public. In regard to André there is something withheld. Miss O'Brien, one feels, could have given him integration.

The writing is careful, easy, at times very beautiful and full of the sort of observations that make one sit up—some extremely irritating, some extraordinarily wise.

Eugene McCabe.

COMING DOWN THE SEINE
by Robert Gibbings.

Dent. 18/-.

This is not the first time I have tried to review a book by Robert Gibbings; I say "tried," because I have never succeeded: in order to review a book, one should be able to read it with a certain critical detachment. This, in the case of Gibbings, I find myself unable to do. I am fascinated from the first line to the last and, like a thriller, I must finish it at a sitting.

From one who has been reviewing for twenty-five years this is praise. On one occasion, I remember, I tried to be hypercritical and commented on the heavy impact of certain of the engravings which were printed in jet black on very white paper. In this volume, even this has been attended to: the numerous, superb engravings are printed in a very dark, olive-dusky ink which matches the clear black type to a miracle.

Like the great Seine itself, Gibbings' story presses on irresistibly, and like certain other rivers, in many eddies and corners, the reader may find nuggets of the purest gold. His anecdotes, his yarns, always ring true and never give the impression of having been inserted for effect. His effortless picture of French life and French people shows how thoroughly he knows and appreciates them.

Gibbings, very good-naturedly, quotes an Irish critic as writing words to the effect that "at Mr.

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THE HAND and FLOWER
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THE ART OF NOEL COWARD

by

ROBERT GREACEN

9/6

"Robert Greacen focusses the Art of Noel Coward in sober perspective; claiming for him recognition exempt from the charge of triviality."

—("Sunday Times")

AMONG THE ILLUSTRATIONS ARE
FACSIMILE PAGES OF MANUSCRIPT

ALDINGTON: KENT

Gibbings' age, he should have sense, and not be gallivanting around the queer places of the world." I should like to go on record as hoping that Mr. Gibbings will continue to gallivant as long as he is prepared to share his pleasures with us. By the way, if you want to give this book as a present (I can't think of a better one) you had better get *two* copies: you'll never part from one.

Cecil French Salkeld

NINE RIVERS FROM

JORDAN by *Denis Johnston*.

Verschoyle.

21/-

Nine Rivers from Jordan is the chronicle of Denis Johnston's experiences as a B.B.C. correspondent in the field during the last war. Those who are familiar with the author's earlier plays will expect to find certain qualities in this new work—humour, vivid imagination, a great breath of freshness, and a certain aplomb—and these qualities, which of their nature are excellently suited to the material of the book, are present in abundance. Described by its publishers as 'autobiography, history, allegory, adventure story, travel, parody, farce and fiction united by art into one incomparable and entertaining whole,' it indeed fulfils all these claims. Only in one or two places when the author makes stylistic experiments with the narrative is there any suggestion, not so much of failure, as of something less than total success. One such part is the final chapter in dramatic form which, whatever its intrinsic merit, will probably be 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' The trouble is that the book is so racy, the flood of anecdote and event so brilliantly told, the development and revelation of the author's own personality under the stress and danger of battle so absorbing, that the reader will be impatient of any section that may seem to slow down the pace. But such obstacles are few and far between. This book of almost five hundred pages is big in every sense—and provides, from a number of varied aspects, first-class reading.

D.M.

COIS CAOLAIRE by *Mairtín O*

Cadhain.

Sáirséal agus Dill.

7/6

It's a point I have not seen mentioned but there is hardly a doubt that the real evil of the British occupation of Ireland was not the occupation itself, evil as that was, but the fact that the invaders were a cheerless crowd. If all our songs are sad and all our wars are merry and if a desire to please is a national characteristic, may it not be that we are expressing, not ourselves, but a cynical, if mirage-like, idea of ourselves?

We have our great writers, but Ireland as she is has escaped them while they have been busy discovering the fanatic heart or the jumble of opposites. There is of course no necessity for our writers to know Ireland at all; our literature, even over-drawn, is always lyrical in its vision, never epic or dramatic, and the lyrical vision is notoriously careless of affairs outside the writer. This granted however, we are still up against the claims made by the writers themselves that they are interpreting the rest of us. The raw-eyed realists have in truth come upon a lonely race in a desolate place, and if the tenements are still crowded and if we continue to slouch around with our faggot of useless memories, let us grant that these are not necessarily the truth but a now traditional way of invoking the Muse.

What I mean is that one enjoys Mairtín O Cadhain's third book of short stories, and notes with some satisfaction that while the characters have Irish names they are really gloom-infested projections that exist nowhere. And, again with some satisfaction, one reflects that a lot more stories such as these will be written. It is after all not too difficult to understand why Ireland has a multitude of writers, hardly any publishers, and only a handful of readers. For myself—I'm going back to the monk's cat. Cats—I take it—have no national characteristics.

P. J. Madden.

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DELIA DALY OF GALLOPING GREEN by Patricia Lynch.

Dent. 8/6

BROGEEN AND THE GREEN SHOES by Patricia Lynch.

Burke. 8/6

THE STORY OF A NUTCRACKER by Sir Desmond

McCarthy and Bryan Guinness.

Heinemann. 9/6.

Patricia Lynch 'needs no bush' for each Autumn she provides a story for children, and it is sure to be what they want. This time it is not a fairy story but a record of quite likely happenings in a nice ordinary Irish family. The Dalys of the flower shop are the kindest people and their neighbours are much the same. The children, however troublesome, and they contrive to be very troublesome, are loved and forgiven and their mistakes are finally straightened out by a kind grandfather.

English children will insist, I feel sure, on coming to Ireland next Summer to seek for Dunooka, the Dalys' seaside home. Who—after rations—could resist the description of Mrs. Daly's cooking? When money was short Mrs. Daly made dumplings and pancakes, but for a festive occasion—just read about it and go to Dunooka to meet the Dalys.

Till Patricia Lynch (who knows) told us about Brogeen, the travelling leprechaun, I thought leprechauns stayed 'put.' No—Brogeen made shoes but he travelled widely and here you can read his adventures in a lovely, friendly Ireland, strange yet familiar. Good or bad he enjoyed adventures and made friends everywhere as this book will do. The illustrations add to the charm. They are unusually attractive and are by Peggy Fortescue.

Story of a Nutcracker has been told by a grandfather and a godfather for a little girl called Marv. The grandfather was the late Sir Desmond McCarthy and the godfather is Bryan Guinness. It was

adapted from Hoffman's Tale by Sir Desmond and put away unfinished. After two world wars, urged by Roland Pym (later the illustrator) he planned to finish it. After his death Bryan Guinness took it up.

So here it is, the ideal Xmas present from grandfather or godfather. It may be a self-interested present, for he will certainly borrow it from the lucky owner and go back in fancy to that long-ago visionary Germany, always evoked by Christmas trees—the Germany of Rhine maidens and gnomes and kindly bears (who might be princes—I prefer them as bears.) In old days we only thought of Nuremberg as an enchanted town of toyshops and kind, queer old toy-makers.

While you read this enchanting book you will hear in fancy the Casse Noisette music, inspired by Hoffman's Tale, and you will enjoy it all the more.

W. M. Letts

THE SINGING SWORDSMAN by John Caball.

Moynihan. 12/6

Woven about the career of the seventeenth-century Gaelic poet, Pierce Ferriter, this novel sets out to bring alive once more a very exciting historical period. This it does. There are moments when Mr. Caball writes really well, but there are moments, all too numerous, when he does not. Nevertheless, there is much in *The Singing Swordsman* that is vivid and moving. Mr. Caball has real understanding of and feeling for his characters and their time, and as the story progresses from the brief courtship of Sybil and her briefly but strikingly described death—as we see the poet fights for all he holds dear—as we see the arrival of Cromwell and the eventual hanging of Ferriter—we feel it gain in intensity and narrative power; the author no longer fumbles, and there is at least one interior monologue which startles by sharpness, word economy and rhythms effectively counterpointed. In the end one wishes that Mr. Caball had rewritten the beginning and brought it up to the standard of the later chapters.

Edward McCarthy

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THE ART OF NOEL
COWARD by *Robert Greacen.*

Hand and Flower Press. 9/6.

Robert Greacen says: 'I have tried neither to debunk Noel Coward nor bury him under a mound of superlatives'; the result of this approach is a sincere and integrated comment on an extraordinary personality who, like the rest of us, must 'journey from point to point as best he can'.

As the emphasis is placed on Coward's writing, I feel the book is misnamed—under such a title I would wish to read of the top-line cabaret artist, composer, film director, stage producer, choreographer, etc.,—and I am certain Mr. Coward would be given star billing in the lost art of conversation. A painting by Noel Coward, reproduced without comment, shows that Mr. Coward paints, and makes me wonder if his secretary has not perhaps a secret collection of sparkling and un-psycho-

somatic doodles by Noel Coward. Mr. Greacen leaves us to discover these things ourselves.

However, from this excellent sympathetic study of the plays, lyrics and stories, we feel if we approached Mr. Coward in a well-mannered way, we could have a well-mannered conversation with an unspoilt, sincere and right-up-to-date person, who would be only too willing to warm the cockles of our heart—these cleverly chosen extracts show he has been doing this for a very long time.

For those who fuss whether Noel Coward will last, or if he will 'some day write a great play', Greacen gives the cheerful news that Mr. Coward never considers such matters and writes for us very much in present time.

Robert Greacen's writing is comfortably honest in a way Noel Coward should like—no doubt, like the rest of us, he will wish there was more of it.

Allan McClelland.

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Michael Mac Grian: Born Co. Down, 1910. Lived in Ireland till he was twenty and then spent five years in Canada and the U.S.A. Served in the R.A.F. in World War II and on demobilization went to live and work on a farm. Married in 1940. Won an Atlantic Award for his short stories in 1946.

Piaras O'Carroll: Born Sligo, 1919. Is a graduate of U.C.D. and now is in the Civil Service. His work has appeared in 'The Bell' and 'The Irish Monthly'.

John Ross Wilson: Born Belfast, 1928, and is reading English Literature at Queen's University. Has not previously been published outside University magazines.

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